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SELECT POEMS OF
WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION BY

A. D. GODLEY

LONDON
HENRY FROWDE

1909

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PREFACE

THE selections in the present volume have been taken, with the exception of those printed on pp. 118-20, 146-53, from Praed's *Poems* (1864). I owe to Sir George Young's indication the verses from the *Brazen Head* (p. 118), which were contributed to Charles Knight's periodical of that name, and have not been since republished. *Love's Eternity* and *The London University* were first printed in the *Morning Chronicle* (May, 1824), and subsequently in Praed's *Political and Occasional Poems*. *One More Quadrille* is here printed for the first time. I have to thank Sir George Young for allowing me to use the MS. in his possession.

A. D. G.

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INTRODUCTION

EVERY volume of selections from a poet ought, I suppose, to aim primarily at representing the poet's best work. This business of choosing is comparatively easy when your author is permanently grave or uniformly gay; all that you have to do is to take the best of his high seriousness or his agreeable levity, charitably assuming—as a selector must not forget what is characteristic as well—that his best is also his most truly representative; being that which comes to him *φύσει*, by the highest of his nature. But where the poet is sometimes grave and sometimes in lighter vein, choice is a more complicated matter. It can very rarely happen that his merit in both kinds is equal; yet they may both be characteristic of his genius, and no selection may be adequate that does not represent both. This is especially true of Præd, who is admirable in one manner of writing, while he is only pleasing in another. Yet a selection which did not include specimens of both would give a very inadequate impression.

There can be no doubt that Præd deserves to be and is most widely known as a writer of social satire

and *vers de société*. This part of his work is not poetry. It is not even minor poetry—a thing difficult to define, but as to which most people will agree that its distinguishing mark is a difference in degree from major poetry: no one seems to get much further in definition than some such *petitio principii*. Praed's difference is not in degree, but in kind. In his lighter mood he is not a poet at all, except by Aristotle's definition as a writer of metrical compositions: he is only a remarkably dexterous versifier, whose first aim is 'lightness of touch'. If he strays into the region of the higher emotions it is only for a moment; his function is, like that of all society versifiers, merely to suggest that they are there, to be just glanced at or adumbrated with a light ironic (not, of course, a scoffing or cynical) manner. Praed was supreme as the contemporary model for this kind of writing—lyrics of the humorous side of life and social satire of a genial Horatian kind—more whimsical, more sentimental than Horace; and probably his supremacy among 'light' English versifiers is unshaken. It is all in the friendliest and cheerfullest vein of satire—whether he is touching off the various characters at *The County Ball*, or sketching *The Vicar* 'Gulielmus Brown, Vir nulla non donandus lauru,' or chaffing schoolgirl sentiment in the ever delightful *My own Araminta*, or recalling his schooldays at Eton. Here is Praed at his best: by these and such as these he will live. All that a selector can do is to register and confirm the judgement of the general public.

But there is a great deal besides ; much of which, it has to be acknowledged, might have had a shorter life had it not been included in the same volumes as *My own Araminta* and *The Vicar*. For Praed was also a serious poet, facile and fluent in the manner of the Romantic school. 'Byronism' being the fashion, young Praed, as well as his eight years' junior contemporary, young Tennyson, fell much under the influence of that poetic convention. The genius of Tennyson turned the Byronic mood to its own uses and created *Maul*,—which Tennyson himself, as well as some of his critics, thought the best thing he had ever written. Praed could not do anything like that. He could express sentiment in the conventional style of the day, with what critics used to call elegance and propriety. No one would deny that there is much real feeling in him, as well as grace of form. Probably he himself would have acknowledged the absence of the indefinable quality which makes 'major' poetry. Most of his serious sentimental lyrics are animated by the Byronic spirit (in its gentler moods), and full of the Byronic stock-in-trade—broken heart, blighted life, stormy past, and all the rest of it—all the *mise en scène* of so many young singers of the early nineteenth century ; the manner which derives from *Lara* and *Manfred* and ends in the minstrelsy of Haynes Bayley. The characteristic young man à la Lord Byron—born with a broken heart, which he wore habitually on his sleeve—had an extraordinary vogue for a time.

But men and even women grew weary of him, as they had wearied of the shepherds and shepherdesses of the eighteenth century; Dickens made fun of him, and Carlyle called him a Dyspeptic Tailor; and in one way or another he came to an end. Fashions have changed several times since the twenties, and our poetic ideals have been complicated by a singularly varied experience; and in this perhaps more fortunate age, now that the

Billows and pillows and hours and flowers
And all the brave rhymes of an older day

have given place to strange esoteric symbolisms and the 'Celtic spirit in literature', we do possibly scant justice to a manner which, after all, had once the charm of novelty, and was approved by quite respectable persons—being indeed a tribute to the undying greatness of the model which it travestied.

Praed wrote poetry, or at least verses, almost as soon as he could write at all. He was one to whom rhyming was always 'no more difficile than to a blackbird 'tis to whistle'. This is how he lisps in numbers *On Pity* in 1815, being then no more than thirteen years old:

Whene'er the poor, worn out with woe,
Oppressed with trouble, years, and grief,
From breasts which feel compassion's glow
Solicit mild the kind relief,

Then Laura opes her ready hand :
The tear bedews Emilia's eye :
Sophia quits the selfish band
To soothe the pangs of poverty.
Gold can but present help afford ;
Emilia's tear is wiped away ;
Sophia feels her just reward,
A bliss which never will decay :
This, the reward of virtue, this
Th' unfeeling heart will never know ;
It is the only earthly bliss
Which is not mixed with earthly woe.

These are not bad 'Primitiae' for a schoolboy of thirteen. Praed then, with this ready gift of versification, naturally took the various moulds of the Romantic school. He wrote lyrics like Byron and romances like Scott (though in the sphere of romances, although he is sometimes serious, he affects more often a serio-comic treatment, as is proper to one whose real *métier* was the lighter vein : *Lidian's Love* rather parodies than imitates *Don Juan*). He had masters in plenty ; and what was perhaps even more necessary, a congenial environment. Inspiration and the hope of immortality may do well enough for poets ; verse-writers need an immediately appreciative public. Praed would have rhymed on a desert island ; it 'came natural' to him ; and unpublished letters of his, which have been shown to the present writer by the courtesy of his nephew, prove that his manner

was almost formed while he was an undergraduate ; but yet his talent must have owed its complete development to the *milieu* in which he lived from early boyhood. Clever schoolboys will still be scribbling couplets and stanzas, even in our more enlightened age, which is beginning to regard 'composition' as a mere impediment to Research and the Higher Scholarship. In the Regency, schoolboys did not research ; and teachers of the higher scholarship were apt to lay more stress on form and style than on matter. Eton first (which made Praed an excellent classic, and where he was one of the founders of the *Etonian*) and then Cambridge nurtured budding scholars in an atmosphere of classical proflusions and prize compositions ; a business to which so deft and graceful a rhymester took very naturally ; and some of his serious work (*Arminius*, for instance, admirably spirited as it is) has something of a prize exercise flavour about it. Afterwards, the social circles in which he found himself—more exclusive than the London society of to-day, and probably therefore more appreciative of comments on their own particular interests—provided exactly the kind of gallery for a society versifier to play to ; and when he entered political life, the House of Commons was still comparatively speaking a close corporation, where also persons were more prominent than they are nowadays, relatively to political issues. Praed wrote a great deal of political verse ; his luckless opponent in a Cornish election was practically buried under an

avalanche of squibs; and he contributed much to journals and magazines. Most of his pieces have been faithfully collected by Sir George Young—to whom all lovers of Praed are much indebted for his help in preparing the volume of *Poems* and his editorship of the *Political and Occasional Poems*—and can be read by the curious in such matters. It is proper to note that the biography prefixed to the *Poems* states conscientiously that ‘of this species of composition he was a consummate master’. But it must be admitted that these smart journalistic personalities about celebrities of the day are rather for an age than for all time. They throw some light on the by-ways and side issues of legislation, and are useful to historians of the period: but for the general reader such pasquinades have necessarily rather lost their brilliance, and the great majority of these pieces can hardly find a place in a volume of selections. Even Aristophanes does not amuse everybody nowadays.

But Praed’s best-known verses have an enduring vogue. Frederick Locker, who had a right to an opinion, says (in *My Confidences*) ‘Praed is the very best of his school; indeed, he has a unique position; for in his narrower vein of whimsical wit, vernacular banter, and antithetical rhetoric, which may correctly be called *vers de société* in its most perfected form, and its exactest sense, he has never been equalled’. Locker went so far as to pay Praed the sincerest compliment in his power by imitating him: ‘I once

tried,' he says, 'to write like Praed'; but 'anti-theoretical rhetoric' was not Locker's real vein, and it is interesting to see that in his later editions he altered or omitted the epigrams which had first pleased him; realizing either that they were foreign to his style or that they had rather gone out of fashion. The difference between Praed and Locker is partly, no doubt, due to intervening years. It is difficult to compare Georgians and Victorians. Life was easier in some ways in the early part of the nineteenth century; people were less afraid of being tedious and 'obvious'. They were sentimental in the fearless old fashion, and the crude expression of their loves and sorrows has too often made mere sport for a generation more critical of itself; and when they made a joke, there was no mistake about it; the thing was labelled and exhibited as such, a matter of patent and unashamed artifice, with the *limae laber* fresh upon it. Latter-day sentimentalists have certainly a very different manner; and our humorists have realized that you must be unforced and spontaneous, if you have to lie awake at night for it. Whether from fashion or natural genius, Praed, as a writer of *vers de société*, is 'epideictic'. There is a certain 'hard brilliance' about his best verses. Here, for instance, is a typically Praedian passage:

Where are my friends? I am alone;
No playmate shares my beaker:

Some lie beneath the churchyard stone,
And some—before the Speaker;
And some compose a tragedy,
And some compose a rondo;
And some draw sword for Liberty,
And some draw pleas for John Doe.

Tom Mill was used to blacken eyes
Without the fear of sessions;
Charles Medlar loathed false quantities
As much as false professions;
Now Mill keeps order in the land,
A magistrate pedantic;
And Medlar's feet repose unscanned
Beneath the wide Atlantic.

The age tolerated and even admired puns, and Praed,
like Hood, was a great punster :

And Brown, who was but poor at Greek,
Is very rich at Canton.

Nothing can be neater, more admirably finished. 'This' (as has been said) 'is the art which does not conceal itself. One may not be able to do the trick; but it is possible to see how the trick is done.' Wit and technique are Praed's strong points. He has not the peculiar gentle whimsical humour of Locker; there is nothing in him at all like the lines *To My Grandmother* or the *Earliest Recollection*; and perhaps he had not Calverley's inimitable and un-

seizable 'lightness of touch'. But it is quite probable that Praed will live longer than either Locker or Calverley, in virtue of two great assets—his undeniable, if almost ostentatious, brilliance of style, and his instinct for seizing upon what is generally interesting in contemporary manners and customs. These pleased his own society, and continue to please ours.

From THE TROUBADOUR

Le Troubadour
Brulant d'amour.

FRENCH BALLAD.

I

MY mother's grave, my mother's grave!

Oh! dreamless is her slumber there,
And drowsily the banners wave

O'er her that was so chaste and fair;
Yea! love is dead, and memory faded!

But when the dew is on the brake,
And silence sleeps on earth and sea,
And mourners weep, and ghosts awake,

Oh! then she cometh back to me,
In her cold beauty darkly shaded!

I cannot guess her face or form;

But what to me is form or face?

I do not ask the weary worm

To give me back each buried grace
Of glistening eyes, or trailing tresses!

I only feel that she is here,

And that we meet, and that we part
And that I drink within mine ear,

And that I clasp around my heart,
Her sweet still voice, and soft caresses!

Not in the waking thought by day,
Not in the sightless dream by night,
Do the mild tones and glances play,
Of her who was my eradle's light!
But in some twilight of calm weather
She glides, by fancy dimly wrought,
A glittering cloud, a darkling beam,
With all the quiet of a thought,
And all the passion of a dream,
Linked in a golden spell together!

II

SPIRITS, that walk and wail to-night,
I feel, I feel that ye are near;
There is a mist upon my sight,
There is a murmur in mine ear,
And a dark dark dread
Of the lonely dead,
Creeps through the whispering atmosphere!

Ye hover o'er the hoary trees,
And the old oaks stand bereft and bare;
Ye hover o'er the moonlight seas,
And the tall masts rot in the poisoned air;
Ye gaze on the gate
Of earthly state,
And the ban-dog shivers in silence there.

Come hither to me upon your cloud,
And tell me of your bliss or pain,
And let me see your shadowy shroud,
And colourless lip, and bloodless vein ;
Where do ye dwell,
In heaven or hell ?
And why do ye wander on earth again ?

Tell to me where and how ye died,
Fell ye in darkness, or fell ye in day,
On lorn hill-side, or roaring tide,
In gorgeous feast, or rushing fray ?
By bowl or blow,
From friend or foe,
Hurried your angry souls away ?

Mute ye come, and mute ye pass,
Your tale untold, your shrift unshriven ;
But ye have blighted the pale grass,
And scared the ghastly stars from heaven ;
And guilt hath known
Your voiceless moan,
And felt that the blood is unforgiven !

III

So glad a life was never, love,
As that which childhood leads,
Before it learns to sever, love,
The roses from the weeds ;

When to be very duteous, love,
Is all it has to do ;
And every flower is beauteous, love,
And every folly true.

And you can still remember, love,
The buds that decked our play,
Though Destiny's December, love,
Has whirled those buds away :
And you can smile through tears, love,
And feel a joy in pain,
To think upon those years, love,
You may not see again.

When we mimicked the Friar's howls, love,
Cared nothing for his creeds,
Made bonnets of his cowls, love,
And bracelets of his beads ;
And gray-beards looked not awful, love,
And grandames made no din,
And vows were not unlawful, love,
And kisses were no sin.

And do you never dream, love,
Of that enchanted well,
Where under the moon-beam, love,
The Fairies wove their spell ?
How oft we saw them greeting, love,
Beneath the blasted tree,
And heard their pale feet beating, love,
To their own minstrelsy !

And do you never think, love,
Of the shallop, and the wave,
And the willow on the brink, love,
Over the poacher's grave?
Where always in the dark, love,
We heard a heavy sigh,
And the dogs were wont to bark, love,
Whenever they went by?

Then gaily shone the heaven, love,
On life's untroubled sea,
And Vidal's heart was given, love,
In happiness to thee;
The sea is all benighted, love,
The heaven has ceased to shine;
The heart is seared and blighted, love,
But still the heart is thine!

IV

CLOTILDA! many hearts are light,
And many lips dissemble;
But I am thine till priests shall fight,
Or Cœur de Lion tremble!—
Hath Jerome burned his rosary,
Or Richard shrunk from slaughter?
Oh! no, no,
Dream not so!
But till you mean your hopes to die,
Engrave them not in water!

Sweet Ida, on my lonely way
 Those tears I will remember,
 Till icicles shall cling to May,
 Or roses to December!—
 Are snow-wreaths bound on Summer's brow?
 Is drowsy Winter waking?
 Oh! no, no,
 Dream not so!
 But lances, and a lover's vow,
 Were only made for breaking.

Lenora, I am faithful still,
 By all the saints that listen,
 Till this warm heart shall cease to thrill,
 Or these wild veins to glisten!—
 This bosom,—is its pulse less high?
 Or sleeps the stream within it?
 Oh! no, no,
 Dream not so!
 But lovers find eternity
 In less than half a minute.

And thus to thee I swear to-night,
 By thine own lips and tresses,
 That I will take no further flight,
 Nor break again my jesses:
 And wilt thou trust the faith I vowed,
 And dream in spite of warning?
 Oh! no, no,
 Dream not so!

But go and lure the midnight cloud,
Or chain the mist of morning.

These words of mine, so false and bland,
Forget that they were spoken!
The ring is on thy radiant hand,—
Dash down the faithless token!
And will they say that Beauty sinned,
That Woman turned a rover?
Oh! no, no,
Dream not so!
But lover's vows are like the wind,
And Vidal is a Lover!

(1823-1824.)

THE RED FISHERMAN

OR

THE DEVIL'S DECOY

Oh flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified!
ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE Abbot arose, and closed his book,
And donned his sandal shoon,
And wandered forth, alone, to look
Upon the summer moon:
A starlight sky was o'er his head,
A quiet breeze around;
And the flowers a thrilling fragrance shed,
And the waves a soothing sound;

It was not an hour, nor a scene, for aught
But love and calm delight ;
Yet the holy man had a cloud of thought
On his wrinkled brow that night.
He gazed on the river that gurgled by,
But he thought not of the reeds ;
He clasped his gilded rosary,
But he did not tell the beads ;
If he looked to the heaven, 'twas not to invoke
The Spirit that dwelleth there ;
If he opened his lips, the words they spoke
Had never the tone of prayer.
A pious priest might the Abbot seem,
He had swayed the crozier well ;
But what was the theme of the Abbot's dream,
The Abbot were loth to tell.

Companionless, for a mile or more,
He traced the windings of the shore.
Oh, beauteous is that river still,
As it winds by many a sloping hill,
And many a dim o'erarching grove,
And many a flat and sunny cove,
And terraced lawns, whose bright arcades
The honeysuckle sweetly shades,
And rocks, whose very crags seem bowers,
So gay they are with grass and flowers !
But the Abbot was thinking of scenery
About as much, in sooth,
As a lover thinks of constancy,
Or an advocate of truth.

He did not mark how the skies in wrath
Grew dark above his head ;
He did not mark how the mossy path
Grew damp beneath his tread ;
And nearer he came, and still more near,
To a pool, in whose recess
The water had slept for many a year,
Unchanged and motionless ;
From the river stream it spread away
The space of a half a rood ;
The surface had the hue of clay
And the scent of human blood ;
The trees and the herbs that round it grew
Were venomous and foul,
And the birds that through the bushes flew
Were the vulture and the owl ;
The water was as dark and rank
As ever a Company pumped,
And the perch, that was netted and laid on the bank,
Grew rotten while it jumped ;
And bold was he who thither came
At midnight, man or boy,
For the place was cursed with an evil name,
And that name was ' The Devil's Decoy ! '

The Abbot was weary as abbot could be,
And he sat down to rest on the stump of a tree :
When suddenly rose a dismal tone,—
Was it a song, or was it a moan?—

‘O ho! O ho!

Above,—below,—

Lightly and brightly they glide and go!
The hungry and keen on the top are leaping,
The lazy and fat in the depths are sleeping;
Fishing is fine when the pool is muddy,
Broiling is rich when the coals are ruddy!’—
In a monstrous fright, by the murky light,
He looked to the left and he looked to the right,
And what was the vision close before him,
That flung such a sudden stupor o’er him?
’Twas a sight to make the hair uprise,
And the life-blood colder run:
The startled Priest struck both his thighs,
And the abbey clock struck one!

All alone, by the side of the pool,
A tall man sat on a three-legged stool,
Kicking his heels on the dewy sod,
And putting in order his reel and rod;
Red were the rags his shoulders wore,
And a high red cap on his head he bore;
His arms and his legs were long and bare;
And two or three locks of long red hair
Were tossing about his scraggy neck,
Like a tattered flag o’er a splitting wreck.
It might be time, or it might be trouble,
Had bent that stout back nearly double,
Sunk in their deep and hollow sockets
That blazing couple of Congreve rockets,

And shrunk and shrivelled that tawny skin,
Till it hardly covered the bones within.
The line the Abbot saw him throw
Had been fashioned and formed long ages ago,
And the hands that worked his foreign vest
Long ages ago had gone to their rest:
You would have sworn, as you looked on them,
He had fished in the flood with Ham and Shem!

There was turning of keys, and creaking of locks,
As he took forth a bait from his iron box.
Minnow or gentle, worm or fly,—
It seemed not such to the Abbot's eye;
Gaily it glittered with jewel and gem,
And its shape was the shape of a diadem.
It was fastened a gleaming hook about
By a chain within and a chain without;
The Fisherman gave it a kick and a spin,
And the water fizzed as it tumbled in!

From the bowels of the earth,
Strange and varied sounds had birth;
Now the battle's bursting peal,
Neigh of steed, and clang of steel;
Now an old man's hollow groan
Echoed from the dungeon stone;
Now the weak and wailing cry
Of a stripling's agony!—
Cold by this was the midnight air;

But the Abbot's blood ran colder,
When he saw a gasping Knight lie there,
With a gash beneath his clotted hair,
And a hump upon his shoulder.
And the loyal churchman strove in vain
To mutter a Pater Noster;
For he who writhed in mortal pain
Was camped that night on Bosworth plain—
The cruel Duke of Gloster!

There was turning of keys, and creaking of locks,
As he took forth a bait from his iron box.
It was a haunch of princely size,
Filling with fragrance earth and skies.
The corpulent Abbot knew full well
The swelling form, and the steaming smell;
Never a monk that wore a hood
Could better have guessed the very wood
Where the noble hart had stood at bay,
Weary and wounded, at close of day.

Sounded then the noisy glee
Of a revelling company,—
Sprightly story, wicked jest,
Rated servant, greeted guest,
Flow of wine, and flight of cork,
Stroke of knife, and thrust of fork:
But, where'er the board was spread,
Grace, I ween, was never said!—

Pulling and tugging the Fisherman sat ;
And the Priest was ready to vomit,
When he hauled out a gentleman, fine and fat,
With a belly as big as a brimming vat,
And a nose as red as a comet.
'A capital stew,' the Fisherman said,
'With cinnamon and sherry !'
And the Abbot turned away his head,
For his brother was lying before him dead,
The Mayor of St. Edmund's Bury !

There was turning of keys, and creaking of locks,
As he took forth a bait from his iron box.
It was a bundle of beautiful things,—
A peacock's tail, and a butterfly's wings,
A scarlet slipper, an auburn curl,
A mantle of silk, and a bracelet of pearl,
And a packet of letters, from whose sweet fold
Such a stream of delicate odours rolled,
That the Abbot fell on his face, and fainted,
And deemed his spirit was half-way sainted.

Sounds seemed dropping from the skies,
Stifled whispers, smothered sighs,
And the breath of vernal gales,
And the voice of nightingales :
But the nightingales were mute,
Envious, when an unseen lute
Shaped the music of its chords
Into passion's thrilling words :

' Smile, Lady, smile!—I will not set
 Upon my brow the coronet,
 Till thou wilt gather roses white
 To wear around its gems of light.
 Smile, Lady, smile!—I will not see
 Rivers and Hastings bend the knee,
 Till those bewitching lips of thine
 Will bid me rise in bliss from mine.
 Smile, Lady, smile!—for who would win
 A loveless throne through guilt and sin?
 Or who would reign o'er vale and hill,
 If woman's heart were rebel still?'

One jerk, and there a lady lay,
 A lady wondrous fair;
 But the rose of her lip had faded away,
 And her cheek was as white and as cold as clay,
 And torn was her raven hair.
 ' Ah ha!' said the Fisher, in merry guise,
 ' Her gallant was hooked before;'
 And the Abbot heaved some piteous sighs,
 For oft he had blessed those deep blue eyes,
 The eyes of Mistress Shore!

There was turning of keys, and creaking of locks,
 As he took forth a bait from his iron box.
 Many the cunning sportsman tried,
 Many he flung with a frown aside;
 A minstrel's harp, and a miser's chest,
 A hermit's cowl, and a baron's crest,

Jewels of lustre, robes of price,
Tomes of heresy, loaded dice,
And golden cups of the brightest wine
That ever was pressed from the Burgundy vine.
There was a perfume of sulphur and nitre,
As he came at last to a bishop's mitre!

From top to toe the Abbot shook,
As the Fisherman armed his golden hook
And awfully were his features wrought
By some dark dream or wakened thought.
Look how the fearful felon gazes
On the scaffold his country's vengeance raises,
When the lips are cracked and the jaws are dry
With the thirst which only in death shall die:
Mark the mariner's frenzied frown
As the swaling wherry settles down,
When peril has numbed the sense and will,
Though the hand and the foot may struggle still:
Wilder far was the Abbot's glance,
Deeper far was the Abbot's trance:
Fixed as a monument, still as air,
He bent no knee, and he breathed no prayer;
But he signed—he knew not why or how,—
The sign of the Cross on his clammy brow.

There was turning of keys, and creaking of locks,
As he stalked away with his iron box.

‘O ho! O ho!

The cock doth crow;

It is time for the Fisher to rise and go.

Fair luck to the Abbot, fair luck to the shrine!
He hath gnawed in twain my choicest line;
Let him swim to the north, let him swim to the
 south,
The Abbot will carry my hook in his mouth!'

The Abbot had preached for many years
 With as clear articulation
As ever was heard in the House of Peers
 Against Emancipation;
His words had made battalions quake,
 Had roused the zeal of martyrs,
Had kept the Court an hour awake,
 And the King himself three quarters:
But ever from that hour, 'tis said,
 He stammered and he stuttered,
As if an axe went through his head
 With every word he uttered.
He stuttered o'er blessing, he stuttered o'er ban,
 He stuttered, drunk or dry;
And none but he and the Fisherman
 Could tell the reason why!

(1827.)

From LIDIAN'S LOVE

The gayest gallants of the Court
 Oft fell in love, on mere report,
 With eyes they had not seen ;
 And knelt, and rhymed, and sighed, and frowned,
 In talismanic fetters bound,
 With flowers and sunshine all around—
 And five-score leagues between.—MS. POEM.

I

SIR LIDIAN had attained his sixteenth year ;
 The golden age of life, wherein are met
 Boyhood's last hope and Manhood's earliest fear
 In mingled bliss and beauty ;—you forget
 Your cradle's laughter, and your school-room's tear,
 Your maiden medal, and your first gazette ;
 But never, never, the bright dreams that blind you
 When sixteen years are newly left behind you.

II

The daily longings to be very great,
 The nightly studies to be very killing,
 The blessed recklessness of human hate,
 The sonnet-singing, and the sigh-distilling,
 The chase of folly, and the scorn of fate,
 Friendship's fresh throb, and Passion's April
 thrilling
 For some high lady, whom your elder brother
 Declares is old enough to be your mother.

III

Sir Lidian had attained his sixteenth year,
 And was the loveliest stripling in the land ;
 His small soft features and his colour clear
 Were like a budding girl's ; his delicate hand
 Seemed fitter for the distaff than the spear ;
 Locks of bright brown his spotless forehead fanned ;
 And he had eyes as blue as summer's heaven,
 And stood a little more than five feet seven.

IV

No gallant flung a lance so fleet and true
 From the trained courser through the golden ring ;
 No joyous harper at the banquet threw
 A lighter touch across the sounding string ;
 Yet on his cheek there was the hectic hue
 And in his eye the fitful wandering
 Which chill our praise to pity, that a bloom
 So fresh and fair is destined to the tomb !

V

And though he danced and played, as I have hinted,
 In dance and song he took but little pleasure ;
 He looked contented, though his partner squinted,
 And seldom frowned when minstrels marred the
 measure ;
 When the rich sky by evening's glow was tinted,
 More glad was he to wander at his leisure,
 Despising fogs, apostrophizing fountains,
 Wasting the time, and worshipping the mountains.

VI

And yet he had not loved!—his early fancies
Of love, first love, the transport and the pain,
Had been extracted from the best romances,
And were, perhaps, of too sublime a strain;
So when he woke from those delicious trances,
He shut his eyes and chose to sleep again,
Shunning realities for shades, and fleeing
From all he saw to all he dreamt of seeing.

VII

In starlit dells and zephyr-haunted bowers,
Moistened by rivulets whose milky foam
Murmured the sweetest music, where warm showers
That trickled fresh from Heaven's eternal dome
Watered bright jewels that sprung up like flowers,—
In such a scene his fancy found a home,
A Paradise of Fancy's fabrication,
Peopled by Houris of the heart's creation;

VIII

Who never thrummed upon the virginals,
Nor tripped by rule, nor fortunately fainted,
Nor practised paying compliments and calls,
Looking satirical, or looking sainted,
Nor shrieked at tournaments, nor blushed at balls,
Nor lisped, nor sighed, nor drooped, nor punned,
nor painted;
Nor wrote a book, nor traded in caresses,
Nor made remarks on other people's dresses.

IX

These were his raptures;—these have all been mine;
I could have worshipped once a constellation,
Filled the fine air with habitants divine,
Found in the sea all sorts of inspiration;
Gone out at noon-day with a Nymph to dine,
Held with an Echo charming conversation,
Commenced intriguing with a star, and kissed,
Like old Ixion, a coquettish mist.

X

Now all is over! passion is congealing,
The glory of the soul is pale and dim;
I gaze all night upon a whitewashed ceiling,
And get no glimpses of the seraphim;
Nothing is left of high and bright revealing
But a weak longing and a wayward whim;
And when Imagination takes the air,
She never wanders beyond Grosvenor-square.

XI

Not that I've been more wicked in my day
Than some, perhaps, who call themselves my
betters;
I liked to prattle better than to pray,
And thought that freedom was as sweet as fetters;
Yet when my lip and lute are turned to clay,
The honest friend who prints my Life and Letters
Will find few stories of satanic arts,
Of broken promises or broken hearts.

XII

But I have moved too long in cold society,
Where it's the fashion not to care a rush ;
Where girls are always thinking of propriety,
And men are laughed at if they chance to blush ;
And thus I've caught the sickness of sobriety,
Forbidden sighs to sound, and tears to gush ;
Become a great philosopher, and curled
Around my heart the poisons of the world.

XIII

And I have learnt at last the hideous trick
Of laughing at whate'er is great or holy ;
At horrid tales that turn a soldier sick,
At griefs that make a Cynic melancholy ;
At Mr. Lawless, and at Mr. Bric,
At Mr. Milman, and at Mr. Croly ;
At Talma and at Young, Macbeth and Cinna,—
Even at you, adorable Corinna !

XIV

To me all light is darkness ;—love is lust,
Painting soiled canvas, poetry soiled paper ;
The fairest loveliness a pinch of dust,
The proudest majesty a breath of vapour ;
I have no sympathy, no tear, no trust,
No morning musing and no midnight taper
For daring manhood, or for dreaming youth,
Or maiden purity, or matron truth.

xv

But sweet Sir Lidian was far more refined ;
He shrank betimes from life and life's defiling ;
His step was on the earth, but oh ! his mind
Made for itself a heaven ! the fool's reviling
He did not seek, or shun ; and thus, enshrined
In glad and innocent thoughts, he went on smiling,
Alone in crowds, unhearing and unheeding,
Fond of the fields, and very fond of reading.

(1826.)

MY FIRST FOLLY

STANZAS WRITTEN AT MIDNIGHT

PRETTY Coquette, the ceaseless play
 Of thine unstudied wit,
 And thy dark eye's remembered ray
 By buoyant fancy lit,
 And thy young forehead's clear expanse,
 Where the locks slept, as through the dance,
 Dreamlike, I saw thee flit,
 Are far too warm and far too fair
 To mix with aught of earthly care;
 But the vision shall come when my day is done,
 A frail and a fair and a fleeting one!

And if the many boldly gaze
 On that bright brow of thine,
 And if thine eye's undying rays
 On countless coxcombs shine,
 And if thy wit flings out its mirth,
 Which echoes more of air than earth,
 For other ears than mine,
 I heed not this; ye are fickle things,
 And I like your very wanderings;
 I gaze, and if thousands share the bliss,
 Pretty capricious! I heed not this.

In sooth I am a wayward youth,
As fickle as the sea,
And very apt to speak the truth,
Unpleasing though it be;
I am no lover; yet as long
As I have heart for jest or song,
An image, Sweet, of thee,
Locked in my heart's remotest treasures,
Shall ever be one of its hoarded pleasures;—
This from the scoffer thou hast won,
And more than this he gives to none.

(20th DECEMBER, 1821.)

From LIDIAN'S LOVE

O LOVE! O beauteous Love!

Thy home is made for all sweet things,
 A dwelling for thine own soft dove
 And souls as spotless as her wings;
 There summer ceases never:
 The trees are rich with luscious fruits,
 The bowers are full of joyous throngs,
 And gales that come from Heaven's own lutes
 And rivulets whose streams are songs
 Go murmuring on for ever!

O Love! O wretched Love!

Thy home is made for bitter care;
 And sounds are in thy myrtle grove
 Of late repentance, long despair,
 Of feigning and forsaking:
 Thy banquet is the doubt and fear
 That come, we know not whence or why
 The smile that hardly masks a tear,
 The laughter that is half a sigh,
 The heart that jests in breaking!

O Love! O faithless Love!

Thy home is like the roving star
 Which seems so fair, so far above
 The world where woes and sorrows are;
 But could we wander thither,

There's nothing but another earth,
As dark and restless as our own,
Where misery is child of mirth,
And every heart is born to groan,
And every flower to wither!

(1826.)

TO —

I

As o'er the deep the seaman roves
 With cloud and storm above him,
 Far, far from all the smiles he loves,
 And all the hearts that love him,
 'Tis sweet to find some friendly mast
 O'er that same ocean sailing,
 And listen in the hollow blast
 To hear the pilot's hailing.

II

On rolls the sea! and brief the bliss,
 And farewell follows greeting;
 On rolls the sea! one hour is his
 For parting and for meeting;
 And who shall tell, on sea or shore,
 In sorrow or in laughter,
 If he shall see that vessel more,
 Or hear that voice hereafter?

III

And thus, as on through shine and shower
 My fickle shallop dances,
 And trembles at all storms that lower,
 And courts all summer glances,

'Tis very sweet, when thoughts oppress
And follies fail to cheer me,
To find some looks of loveliness,
Some tones of kindness, near me.

IV

And yet I feel, while hearts are gay
And smiles are bright around me,
That those who greet me on my way
Must leave me as they found me,
To rove again, as erst I roved,
Through winter and rough weather,
And think of all the friends I loved,
But loved and lost together:

V

And scenes and smiles, so pure and glad,
Are found and worshipped only
To make our sadness seem more sad,
Our loneliness more lonely;—
It matters not! a pleasant dream
At best can be but dreaming;
And if the true may never beam,
Oh! who would slight the seeming?

VI

And o'er the world my foot may roam,
Through foreign griefs and pleasures,
And other climes may be my home,
And other hearts my treasures;

But in the mist of memory
Shall time and space be cheated,
And those kind looks revived shall be,
And those soft tones repeated!

VII

Believe,—if e'er this rhyme recall
One thought of him who frames it,—
Believe him one who brings his all
Where Love or Friendship claims it;
Though cold the surface of his heart,
There's warmth beneath the embers;
For all it hopes, it would not part
With aught that it remembers!

A RETROSPECT

The Lady of his love, oh, she was changed,
As by the sickness of the soul!—BYRON.

Go thou, white in thy soul, to fill a throne
Of innocence and sanctity in Heaven.—FORD.

I KNEW that it must be!

Yea, thou art changed—all worshipped as thou art—
Mourned as thou shalt be! sickness of the heart
Hath done its work on thee!

Thy dim eyes tell a tale—
A piteous tale of vigils; and the trace
Of bitter tears is on thy beauteous face,—
Beauteous, and yet so pale.

Changed Love!—but not alone!
I am not what they think me; though my cheek
Wear but its last year's furrow, though I speak
Thus in my natural tone.

The temple of my youth
Was strong in moral purpose; once I felt
The glory of Philosophy, and knelt
In the pure shrine of Truth.

I went into the storm,
And mocked the billows of the tossing sea:
I said to Fate, 'What wilt thou do to me?
I have not harmed a worm!'—

Vainly the heart is steeled
In Wisdom's armour; let her burn her books!
I look upon them as the soldier looks
Upon his cloven shield.

Virtue and Virtue's rest—
How have they perished! through my onward course
Repentance dogs my footsteps: black Remorse
Is my familiar guest.

The glory and the glow
Of the world's loveliness have past away;
And Fate hath little to inflict to-day,
And nothing to bestow.

Is not the damning line
Of guilt and grief engraven on me now?
And the fierce passion which hath scathed thy brow—
Hath it not blasted mine?

No matter! I will turn
To the straight path of Duty; I have wrought
At last my wayward spirit to be taught
What it hath yet to learn.

Labour shall be my lot:
My kindred shall be joyful in my praise;
And Fame shall twine for me in after days
A wreath I covet not:

And, if I cannot make,
Dearest, thy hope my hope, thy trust my trust,
Yet will I study to be good and just
And blameless, for thy sake.

Thou may'st have comfort yet!
Whate'er the source from which those waters glide,
Thou hast found healing mercy in their tide;—
Be happy, and forget.

Forget me, and farewell;
But say not that in me new hopes and fears,
Or absence, or the lapse of gradual years,
Will break thy memory's spell:

Indelibly, within,
All I have lost is written; and the theme
Which silence whispers to my thought and dream
Is sorrow still,—and sin.

(1831.)

A PREFACE

I HAVE a tale of Love to tell;—
Lend me thy light lute, L.E.L.

Lend me thy lute! what other strings
Should speak of those delicious things,
Which constitute Love's joys and woes
In pretty duodecimos?
Thou knowest every herb and flower,
Of wondrous name, and wondrous power,
Which, gathered where white wood-doves nestle,
And beat up by poetic pestle,
Bind gallant knights in fancied fetters,
And set young ladies writing letters :
Thou singest songs of floods and fountains,
Of mounted lords and lordly mountains,
Of dazzling shields and dazzling glances,
Of piercing frowns and piercing lances,
Of leaping brands and sweeping willows,
Of dreading seas and dreaming billows,
Of sunbeams which are like red wine,
Of odorous lamps of argentine,
Of cheeks that burn, of hearts that freeze,
Of odours that send messages,
Of kingfishers and silver pheasants,
Of gems to which the Sun makes presents,
Of miniver and timeworn walls,
Of clairschachs and of atabals.

Within thy passion-haunted pages
Throng forward girls—and distant ages,
The lifeless learns at once to live,
The dumb grows strangely talkative,
Resemblances begin to strike
In things exceedingly unlike,
All nouns, like statesmen, suit all places,
And verbs, turned lawyers, hunt for cases.

Oh! if it be a crime to languish
Over thy scenes of bliss or anguish,
To float with Raymond o'er the sea,
To sigh with dark-eyed Rosalie,
And sit in reverie luxurious
Till tea grows cold, and aunts grow furious,
I own the soft impeachment true,
And burn the Westminster Review.
Lend me thy lute; I'll be a poet;
All Paternoster Row shall know it!
I'll rail in rhyme at cruel Fate
From Temple Bar to Tyburn Gate;
Old Premium's daughter in the City
Shall feel that love is kin to pity,
Hot ensigns shall be glad to borrow
My notes of rapture and of sorrow,
And I shall hear sweet voices sighing
'So young!—and I am told he's dying!'
Yes! I shall wear a wreath eternal,
For full twelve months, in Post and Journal,
Admired by all the Misses Brown
Who go to school at Kentish Town,

And worshipped by the fair Arachne
Who makes my handkerchiefs at Hackney!

Vain, vain!—take back the lute! I see
Its chords were never meant for me.
For thine own song, for thine own hand,
That lute was strung in Fairy-land;
And, if a stranger's thumb should fling
Its rude touch o'er one golden string,—
Good night to all the music in it!
The string would crack in half a minute.
Take back the lute! I make no claim
To inspiration or to fame;
The hopes and fears that bards should cherish,
I care not when they fade and perish;
I read political economy,
Voltaire and Cobbett, and gastronomy,
And, when I would indite a story
Of woman's faith or warrior's glory,
I always wear a night-cap sable,
And put my elbows on the table,
And hammer out the tedious toil
By dint of Walker, and lamp-oil.
I never feel poetic mania,
I gnaw no laurel with Urania,
I court no critic's tender mercies,
I count the feet in all my verses,
And own myself a screaming gander
Among the shrill swans of Mæander!

(1824.)

TIME'S SONG

O'ER the level plains, where mountains greet me as
 I go,
O'er the desert waste, where fountains at my
 bidding flow,
On the boundless beam by day, on the cloud by night,
I am riding hence away : who will chain my flight ?
War his weary watch was keeping,—I have crushed
 his spear ;
Grief within her bower was weeping,—I have dried
 her tear ;
Pleasure caught a minute's hold,—then I hurried by,
Leaving all her banquet cold, and her goblet dry.
Power had won a throne of glory : where is now
 his fame ?
Genius said 'I live in story : ' who hath heard his
 name ?
Love beneath a myrtle bough whispered 'Why so
 fast ?'
And the roses on his brow withered as I past.
I have heard the heifer lowing o'er the wild wave's
 bed ;
I have seen the billow flowing where the cattle fed ;
Where began my wanderings ? Memory will not say !
Where will rest my weary wings ? Science turns
 away !

ARMINIUS¹

Cernebatur contra minitabundus Arminius, praeliumque denuntians.—TACIT. *Annal.* ii. 10.

I

BACK,—back!—he fears not foaming flood
 Who fears not steel-clad line!
 No offspring this of German blood,—
 No brother thou of mine;
 Some bastard spawn of menial birth,—
 Some bound and bartered slave:
 Back,—back!—for thee our native earth
 Would be a foreign grave!

II

Away! be mingled with the rest
 Of that thy chosen tribe;
 And do the tyrant's high behest,
 And earn the robber's bribe;
 And win the chain to gird the neck,
 The gems to hide the hilt,
 And blazon honour's hapless wreck
 With all the gauds of guilt.

¹ Arminius, the assertor of the liberties of Germany, had a brother who had been brought up and had risen to high rank in the Roman service. Upon one occasion, when the two armies were separated by the river Weser, the brothers, after a colloquy which ended in reciprocal reproaches, were scarcely prevented, says Tacitus, from rushing into the stream and engaging hand to hand.

III

And would'st thou have me share the prey?
By all that I have done,
By Varus' bones, which day by day
Are whitening in the sun,—
The legion's shattered panoply,
The eagle's broken wing,
I would not be, for earth and sky,
So loathed and scorned a thing!

IV

Ho! bring me here the wizard, boy,
Of most surpassing skill,
To agonize, and not destroy,
To palsy, and not kill:
If there be truth in that dread art,
In song, and spell, and charm,
Now let them torture the base heart,
And wither the false arm!

V

I curse him by our country's gods,
The terrible, the dark,
The scatterers of the Roman rods,
The quellers of the bark!
They fill a cup with bitter woe,
They fill it to the brim;
Where shades of warriors feast below,
That cup shall be for him!

VI

I curse him by the gifts our land
Hath owed to him and Rome,—
The riving axe and burning brand,
Rent forests, blazing home;—
O may he shudder at the thought,
Who triumphs in the sight;
And be his waking terrors wrought
Into fierce dreams by night!

VII

I curse him by the hearts that sigh
In cavern, grove, and glen,—
The sobs of orphaned infancy,
The tears of aged men;—
When swords are out, and spear and dart
Leave little space for prayer,
No fetter on man's arm and heart
Hangs half so heavy there.

VIII

Oh misery, that such a vow
On such a head should be!
Why comes he not, my brother, now,
To fight or fall with me,—
To be my mate in banquet bowl,
My guard in battle throng,
And worthy of his father's soul
And of his country's song?

IX

But it is past :—where heroes press
And spoilers bend the knee,
Arminius is not brotherless,—
His brethren are the free !
They come around ; one hour, and light
Will fade from turf and tide ;
Then onward, onward to the fight,
With darkness for our guide !

X

To-night, to-night,—when we shall meet
In combat face to face,—
There only would Arminius greet
The renegade's embrace ;
The canker of Rome's guilt shall be
Upon his Roman name,
And as he lives in slavery,
So shall he die in shame !

(1827.)

CHILDHOOD AND HIS VISITORS

I

ONCE on a time, when sunny May
 Was kissing up the April showers,
 I saw fair Childhood hard at play
 Upon a bank of blushing flowers:
 Happy—he knew not whence or how,—
 And smiling,—who could choose but love him?
 For not more glad than Childhood's brow,
 Was the blue heaven that beamed above him.

II

Old Time, in most appalling wrath,
 That valley's green repose invaded;
 The brooks grew dry upon his path,
 The birds were mute, the lilies faded.
 But Time so swiftly winged his flight,
 In haste a Grecian tomb to batter,
 That Childhood watched his paper kite,
 And knew just nothing of the matter.

III

With curling lip and glancing eye
 Guilt gazed upon the scene a minute;
 But Childhood's glance of purity
 Had such a holy spell within it,

That the dark demon to the air
Spread forth again his baffled pinion,
And hid his envy and despair,
Self-tortured, in his own dominion.

IV

Then stepped a gloomy phantom up,
Pale, cypress-crowned, Night's awful daughter,
And proffered him a fearful cup
Full to the brim of bitter water:
Poor Childhood bade her tell her name;
And when the beldame muttered—'Sorrow,'
He said,—'Don't interrupt my game;
I'll taste it, if I must, to-morrow.'

V

The Muse of Pindus thither came,
And wooed him with the softest numbers
That ever scattered wealth and fame
Upon a youthful poet's slumbers;
Though sweet the music of the lay,
To Childhood it was all a riddle,
And 'Oh,' he cried, 'do send away
That noisy woman with the fiddle!'

VI

Then Wisdom stole his bat and ball,
And taught him, with most sage endeavour,
Why bubbles rise and acorns fall,
And why no toy may last for ever.

She talked of all the wondrous laws
Which Nature's open book discloses,
And Childhood, ere she made a pause,
Was fast asleep among the roses.

VII

Sleep on, sleep on! Oh! Manhood's dreams
Are all of earthly pain or pleasure,
Of Glory's toils, Ambition's schemes,
Of cherished love, or hoarded treasure:
But to the couch where Childhood lies
A more delicious trance is given,
Lit up by rays from seraph eyes,
And glimpses of remembered Heaven!

(1829.)

CHILDHOOD'S CRITICISM

TO MISS E ——— S ———, ON HER REPEATING THE
PRECEDING LINES

You've only got to curtsey, whisp—
—er, hold your head up, laugh and lisp,
And then you're sure to take.

REJECTED ADDRESSES.

I

A POET o'er his tea and toast
Composed a page of verse last winter,
Transcribed it on the best Bath post,
And sent the treasure to a printer.
He thought it an enchanting thing;
And, fancying no one else could doubt it,
Went out, as happy as a king,
To hear what people said about it.

II

Queen Fame was driving out that day;
And, though she scarcely seemed to know him,
He bustled up, and tried to say
Something about his little poem;
But ere from his unhappy lip
Three timid trembling words could falter,
The goddess cracked her noisy whip,
And went to call upon Sir Walter!

III

Old Criticism, whose glance observed
The minstrel's blushes and confusion,
Came up and told him he deserved
The rack at least for his intrusion:
The poor youth stared and strove to speak;
His tyrant laughed to see him wincing,
And grumbled out a line of Greek,
Which Dullness said was quite convincing.

IV

Then stepped a gaunt and wrinkled witch,
Hight Avarice, from her filthy hovel;
And 'Rhyme,' quoth she, 'won't make you rich;
Go home, good youth, and write a novel!
Cut up the follies of the age;
Sauce them with puns and disquisitions;
Let Colburn cook your title-page,
And I'll ensure you six editions.'

V

Ambition met him next;—he sighed
To see those once-loved wreaths of laurel,
And crept into a bower to hide,
For he and she had had a quarrel.
The goddess of the cumbrous crown
Called after him, in tones of pity,
'My son, you've dropped your wig and gown!
And, bless me, how you've torn your Chitty!'

VI

'Twas all unheeded or unheard,
 For now he knocked at Beauty's portal;
 One word from her, one golden word,
 He knew, would make his lays immortal.
 Alas! he elbowed through a throng
 Of danglers, dancers, catgut scrapers,
 And found her twisting up his song
 Into the sweetest candlepapers.

VII

He turned away with sullen looks
 From Beauty, and from Beauty's scorning.
 'To-night,' he said, 'I'll burn my books;
 I'll break my harpstrings in the morning.'—
 When lo, a laughing Fay drew near;
 And with soft voice, more soft than Circe's,
 She whispered in the poet's ear
 The sounds the poet loved—his verses!

VIII

He looked, and listened; and it seemed
 In Childhood's lips the lines grew sweeter:
 Good luck! till now he had not dreamed
 How bright the thought, how smooth the metre.
 Ere the last stanza was begun,
 He managed all his wrath to smother;
 And when the little Nymph had done,
 Said 'Thank you, Love;—I'll write another!'

(OCTOBER 1, 1829.)

CASSANDRA

Στένω, στένω σε, δισσὰ καὶ τριπλᾶ δορὸς
 Αἴθις πρὸς ἀλκὴν καὶ διαρπαγὰς δόμων
 Καὶ πῦρ ἐναυγάζουσαν αἰστωτήριον.

LYCOPHRON, *Cassandra*, 69.

I

THEY hurried to the feast,
 The warrior and the priest,
 And the gay maiden with her jewelled brow;
 The minstrel's harp and voice
 Said 'Triumph and rejoice!'—
 One only mourned!—many are mourning now!

II

'Peace! startle not the light
 With the wild dreams of night!'—
 So spake the Princes in their pride and joy,
 When I in their dull ears
 Shrieked forth my tale of tears,
 'Woe to the gorgeous city, woe to Troy!'—

III

Ye watch the dun smoke rise
 Up to the lurid skies;
 Ye see the red light flickering on the stream;
 Ye listen to the fall
 Of gate and tower and wall;
 Sisters, the time is come!—alas, it is no dream!

IV

Through hall and court and porch
Glides on the pitiless torch ;
The swift avengers faint not in their toil :
Vain now the matron's sighs,
Vain now the infant's cries ;—
Look, sisters, look ! who leads them to the spoil ?

V

Not Pyrrhus, though his hand
Is on his father's brand ;
Not the fell framer of the accursed steed ;
Not Nestor's hoary head,
Nor Teucer's rapid tread,
Nor the fierce wrath of impious Diomede.

VI

Visions of deeper fear
To-night are warring here ;—
I know them, sisters, the mysterious Three :
Minerva's lightning frown,
And Juno's golden crown,
And him, the mighty Ruler of the sounding sea !

VII

Through wailing and through woe
Silent and stern they go ;
So have I ever seen them in my trance :

Exultingly they guide
 Destruction's fiery tide,
 And lift the dazzling shield, and poise the deadly lance.

VIII

Lo, where the old man stands,
 Folding his palsied hands,
 And muttering, with white lips, his querulous
 prayer:
 'Where is my noble son,
 My best, my bravest one—
 Troy's hope and Priam's—where is Hector, where?'

IX

Why is thy falchion grasped?
 Why is thy helmet clasped?
 Fitter the fillet for such brow as thine!
 The altar reeks with gore;
 O sisters, look no more!
 It is our father's blood upon the shrine!

X

And ye, alas! must roam
 Far from your desolate home,
 Far from lost Ilium, o'er the joyless wave;
 Ye may not from these bowers
 Gather the trampled flowers
 To wreath sad garlands for your brethren's grave.

XI

Away, away! the gale
Stirs the white-bosomed sail;
Hence! look not back to freedom or to fame;
Labour must be your doom,
Night-watchings, days of gloom,
The bitter bread of tears, the bridal couch of shame.

XII

Even now some Grecian dame
Beholds the signal flame,
And waits, expectant, the returning fleet;
'Why lingers yet my lord?
Hath he not sheathed his sword?
Will he not bring my handmaid to my feet?'

XIII

Me, too, the dark Fates call:
Their sway is over all,
Captor and captive, prison-house and throne:—
I tell of others' lot;
They hear me, heed me not!
Hide, angry Phoebus, hide from me mine own

(1830.)

THE COVENANTER'S LAMENT FOR
BOTHWELL BRIGG

THE men of sin prevail!
Once more the prince of this world lifts his horn;
Judah is scattered, as the chaff is borne
Before the stormy gale.

Where are our brethren? where
The good and true, the terrible and fleet?
They whom we loved, with whom we sat at meat,
With whom we kneeled in prayer?

Mangled and marred they lie
Upon the bloody pillow of their rest;
Stern Dalzell smiles, and Clavers with a jest
Spurs his fierce charger by.

So let our foes rejoice;
We to the Lord, who hears their impious boasts,
Will call for comfort; to the God of hosts
We will lift up our voice.

Give ear unto our song;
For we are wandering o'er our native land
As sheep that have no shepherd; and the hand
Of wicked men is strong.

Only to thee we bow:
Our lips have drained the fury of thy cup;
And the deep murmurs of our hearts go up
To Heaven for vengeance now.

Avenge,—oh! not our years
 Of pain and wrong, the blood of martyrs shed,
 The ashes heaped upon the hoary head,
 The maiden's silent tears,
 The babe's bread torn away,
 The harvest blasted by the war steed's hoof,
 The red flame wreathing o'er the cottage roof,
 Judge not for these to-day!—

Is not thine own dread rod
 Mocked by the proud, thy holy book disdained,
 Thy name blasphemed, thy temple courts profaned?—
 Avenge thyself, O God!

Break Pharaoh's iron crown;
 Bind with new chains their nobles and their kings;
 Wash from thine house the blood of unclean things,
 And hurl their Dagon down!

Come in thine own good time!
 We will abide; we have not turned from thee,
 Though in a world of grief our portion be,
 Of bitter grief, and crime.

Be thou our guard and guide!
 Forth from the spoiler's synagogue we go,
 That we may worship where the torrents flow
 And where the whirlwinds ride.

From lonely rocks and caves
 We will pour forth our sacrifice of prayer.—
 On, brethren, to the mountains! Seek we there
 Safe temples, quiet graves!

THE COUNTY BALL

Busy people, great and small,
 Awkward dancers, short and tall,
 Ladies, fighting which shall call,
 Loungers, pertly quizzing all.

ANON.

THIS is a night of pleasure! Care,
 I shake thee from me! do not dare
 To stir from out thy murky cell,
 Where in their dark recesses dwell
 Thy kindred gnomes, who love to nip
 The rose on Beauty's cheek and lip,
 Until beneath their venom'd breath
 Life wears the pallid hue of death.
 Avaunt! I shake thee from me, Care!
 The gay, the youthful, and the fair,
 From Lodge, and Court, and House, and Hall
 Are hurrying to the County Ball.
 Avaunt! I tread on haunted ground;
 And giddy Pleasure draws around
 To shield us from thine envious spite
 Her magic circle! nought to-night
 Over that guarded barrier flies
 But laughing lips and smiling eyes;
 My look shall gaze around me free,
 And like my look my line shall be;
 While fancy leaps in every vein,
 While love is life, and thought is pain,
 I will not rule that look and line
 By any word or will of thine.

The Moon hath risen. Still and pale
Thou movest in thy silver veil,
Queen of the night! the filmy shroud
Of many a mild transparent cloud
Hides, yet adorns thee; meet disguise
To shield thy blush from mortal eyes.
Full many a maid hath loved to gaze
Upon thy melancholy rays;
And many a fond despairing youth
Hath breathed to thee his tale of truth;
And many a luckless rhyming wight
Hath looked upon thy tender light,
And spilt his precious ink upon it,
In ode, or elegy, or sonnet.
Alas! at this inspiring hour,
I feel not, I, thy boasted power,
Nor seek to gain thine approbation
By vow, or prayer, or invocation;
I ask not what the vapours are
That veil thee like a white cymar,
Nor do I care a single straw
For all the stars I ever saw!
I fly from thee, I fly from these,
To bow to earthly goddesses,
Whose forms in mortal beauty shine,
As fair, but not so cold, as thine.

But this is foolish! Stars and Moon,
You look quite beautiful in June;
But when a bard sits down to sing,
Your beauty is a dangerous thing;

To muse upon your placid beam
One wanders sadly from one's theme,
And when weak poets go astray,
'The stars are more in fault than they.'
The moon is charming; so, perhaps,
Are pretty maidens in mob-caps;
But, when a ball is in the case,
They're both a little out of place.

I love a ball! there's such an air
Of magic in the lustres' glare,
And such a spell of witchery
In all I hear and all I see,
That I can read in every dance
Some relic sweet of old romance:
As fancy wills I laugh and smile,
And talk such nonsense all the while
That when Dame Reason rules again,
And morning cools my heated brain,
Reality itself doth seem
Nought but the pageant of a dream;
In raptures deep I gaze, as now,
On smiling lip and tranquil brow,
While merry voices echo round,
And music's most inviting sound
Swells on mine ear; the glances fly,
And love and folly flutter high,
And many a fair romantic cheek,
Reddened with pleasure or with pique,
Glow with a sentimental flush
That seems a bright unfading blush;

And slender arms before my face
Are rounded with a statue's grace ;
And ringlets wave, and beauteous feet,
Swifter than lightning, part and meet ;
Frowns come and go ; white hands are pressed,
And sighs are heard, and secrets guessed,
And looks are kind, and eyes are bright,
And tongues are free, and hearts are light.

Sometimes upon the crowd I look,
Secure in some sequestered nook ;
And while from thence I look and listen,
Though ladies' eyes so gaily glisten,
Though ladies' locks so lightly float,
Though music pours her mellowed note,
Some little spite will oft intrude
Upon my merry solitude.

By turns the ever-varying scene
Awakes within me mirth and spleen ;
By turns the gay and vain appear ;
By turns I love to smile and sneer,
Mixing my malice with my glee,
Good humour with misanthropy ;
And while my raptured eyes adore
Half the bright forms that flit before,
I notice with a little laugh
The follies of the other half.
That little laugh will oft call down,
From matron sage, rebuke and frown ;

Little, in truth, for these I care :
 By Momus and his mirth I swear,—
 For all the dishes Rowley tastes,
 For all the paper Courtenay wastes,
 For all the punch his subjects quaff,
 I would not change that little laugh!¹
 Shall I not laugh, when every fool
 Comes hither for my ridicule,—
 When ev'ry face that flits to-night
 In long review before my sight
 Shows off, unasked, its airs and graces,
 Unconscious of the mirth it raises?

Skilled to deceive our ears and eyes
 By civil looks and civil lies,
 Skilled from the search of men to hide
 His narrow bosom's inward pride,
 And charm the blockheads he beguiles
 By uniformity of smiles,
 The County Member, bright Sir Paul,
 Is Primo Buffo at the Ball.

Since first he longed to represent
 His fellow-men in Parliament,
 Courted the cobblers and their spouses,
 And sought his honours in mud houses,
 Full thirty springs have come and fled ;
 And though from off his shining head

1

Hoc ego opertum,
 Hoc ridere meum, tam nil, nulla tibi vendo
 Iliade.

PERS.

The twin destroyers, Time and Care,
 Begin to pluck its fading hair,
 Yet where it grew, and where it grows,
 Lie powder's never-varying snows,
 And hide the havoc years have made
 In kind monotony of shade.

Sir Paul is young in all but years;
 And, when his courteous face appears,
 The maiden wall-flowers of the room
 Admire the freshness of his bloom,
 Hint that his face has made him vain,
 And vow 'he grows a boy again,'
 And giddy girls of gay fifteen
 Mimic his manner and his mien;
 And when the supple politician
 Bestows his bow of recognition,
 Or forces on th' averted ear
 The flattery it affects to fear,
 They look, and laugh behind the fan,
 And dub Sir Paul 'the young old man.'

Look! as he paces round, he greets
 With nod and simper all he meets:—
 'Ah, ha! your Lordship! is it you?
 Still slave to beauty and *beaux yeux*?
 Well, well! and how's the gout, my Lord?—
 My dear Sir Charles, upon my word,
L'air de Paris, since last I knew you,
 Has been Medea's cauldron to you.—
 William, my boy! how fast you grow!
 Yours is a light fantastic toe,

Winged with the wings of Mercury !
I was a scholar once, you see !
And how 's the mare you used to ride ?
And who 's the Hebe by your side ?—
Doctor ! I thought I heard you sneeze ?
How is my dear Hippocrates ?
What have you done for old John Oates,
The gouty merchant with five votes ?
What, dead ? well, well ! no fault of yours !
There is no drug that always cures !
Ah doctor ! I begin to break ;
And I 'm glad of it, for *your* sake !'

As thus the spruce M.P. runs on,
Some quiet dame, who dotes upon
His speeches, buckles, and grimace,
Grows very eloquent in praise.
' How can they say Sir Paul is proud ?
I 'm sure, in all the evening 's crowd,
There 's not a man that bows so low ;
His words come out so soft and slow ;
And when he begged me keep my seat,
He looked so civil and so sweet :'
' Ma'am,' says her spouse, in harsher tone,
' He only wants to keep his own.'
Her Ladyship is in a huff ;
And Miss, enraged at *Ma*'s rebuff,
Rings the alarm in t'other ear :
' Lord ! now Papa, you're too severe ;
Where in the country will you see
Manners so taking and so free ?'

'His manners free? I only know
 Our votes have made his letters so!'—
 'And then he talks with so much ease,
 And then he gives such promises!'
 'Gives promises! and well he may,
 You know they're all he gives away!'
 'How folks misrepresent Sir Paul!'
 'Tis he misrepresents us all!'
 'How very stale!—but you'll confess
 He has a charming taste in dress,
 And uses such delightful scent!
 And when he pays a compliment'—
 'Eh! and what then, my pretty pet!
 What then?—he never pays a debt!'

Sir Paul is skilled in all the tricks
 Of politesse and politics;
 Long hath he learned to wear a mien
 So still, so open, so serene,
 That strangers in those features grave
 Would strive in vain to read a knave.
 Alas! it is believed by all
 There is more 'Sir' than 'Saint' in Paul;
 He knows the value of a place;
 Can give a promise with a grace;
 Is quite an adept at excuse;
 Sees when a vote will be of use;
 And, if the Independents flinch,
 Can help his Lordship at a pinch.
 Acutely doth he read the fate
 Of deep intrigues and plans of state,

And if perchance some powdered peer
Hath gained or lost the Monarch's ear,
Foretells, without a shade of doubt,
The comings in and goings out.
When placemen of distinguished note
Mistake, mislead, misname, misquote,
Confound the Papist and the Turk,
Or murder Sheridan and Burke,
Or make a riddle of the laws,
Sir Paul grows hoarse in his applause:
And when in words of equal size
Some Oppositionist replies,
And talks of taxes and starvation
And Catholic Emancipation,
The Knight, in indolent repose,
Looks only to the Ayes and Noes.
Let youth say 'Grand!'—Sir Paul says 'Stuff!'
Let youth take fire!—Sir Paul takes snuff.

Methinks amid the crowded room
I see one countenance of gloom;
Whence is young Edmund's pain or pique?
Whence is the paleness of his cheek?
And whence the wrathful eye, that now
Lowers, like Kean's, beneath the brow,
And now again on earth is bent,
'Twixt anger and embarrassment?
Is he poetical, or sad?—
Really—or fashionably—mad?
Are his young spirits colder grown
At Ellen's—or the Muse's frown?

He did not love in other days
 To wear the sullens on his face
 When merry sights and sounds were near
 Nor on his unregarding ear
 Unheeded thus was wont to fall
 The music of the County Ball.

I pity all whom Fate unites
 To vulgar belles on gala nights;
 But chiefly him who haply sees
 The day-star of his destinies—
 The Beauty of his fondest dreaming—
 Sitting in solitude, and seeming
 To lift her dark capricious eye
 Beneath its fringe reproachingly.
 Alas! my luckless friend is tied
 To the fair hoyden by his side,
 Who opens, without law or rule,
 The treasures of the boarding-school;
 And she is prating learnedly
 Of logic and of chemistry,
 Describing chart and definition
 With geographical precision,
 Culling her words, as bid by chance,
 From England, Italy, or France,
 Until, like many a clever dunce,
 She murders all the three at once.
 Sometimes she mixes by the ounce
 Discussions deep on frill and flounce;
 Points out the stains, that stick like burs
 To ladies' gowns—or characters;

Talks of the fiddles and the weather,
Of Laura's wreath, and Fannia's feather ;
All which obedient Edmund hears
With passive look, and open ears,
And understands about as much
As if the lady spoke in Dutch ;
Until, in indignation high,
She finds the youth makes no reply,
And thinks he's grown as deaf a stock
As Dido—or Marpesian rock.¹
Ellen, the lady of his love,
Is doomed the like distress to prove,
Chained to a Captain of the wars,
Like Venus by the side of Mars.
Hark ! Valour talks of conquered towns ;
See ! silent Beauty frets and frowns ;
The man of fights is wondering now
That girls *won't* speak when dandies bow ;
And Ellen finds, with much surprise,
That beaux *will* speak when belles despise.
'Ma'am,' says the Captain, 'I protest
I come to ye a stranger guest,
Fresh from the dismal, dangerous land
Where men are blinded by the sand,
Where undiscovered things are hid
In owl-frequented pyramid,
And mummies with their silent looks
Appear like memorandum books

¹ Dido—non magis—sermone movetur
Quam si dura silex, aut stet Marpesia cautes.

Giving a hint of death, for fear
 We men should be too happy here.
 But if upon my native land
 Fair ones as still as mummies stand,
 By Jove,—I had as lief be there!—
 (The Lady looks—‘I wish you were.’)
 ‘I fear I’m very dull to-night’—
 (The Lady looks—‘You’re very right.’)
 ‘But if one smile—one cheering ray’—
 (The Lady looks another way—)
 ‘Alas! from some more happy man’—
 (The Lady stoops and bites her fan.)
 ‘Flattery, perhaps, is not a crime,’—
 (The Lady dances out of time;)
 ‘Perhaps e’en now within your heart,
 Cruel! you wish us leagues apart,
 And banish me from Beauty’s presence!’
 The Lady bows in acquiescence,
 With steady brow, and studied face,
 As if she thought, in such a case,
 A contradiction to her Beau
 Neither polite—nor à propos.

Unawed by scandal or by sneer,
 Is Reuben Nott the blunderer here?
 What! is he willing to expose
 His erring brain to friends and foes?
 And does he venturously dare,
 ‘Midst grinning fop and spiteful fair,
 In spite of all their ancient slips,
 To open those unhappy lips?

Poor Reuben! o'er his infant head
Her choicest bounties Nature shed;
She gave him talent, humour, sense,
A decent face, and competence,
And then, to mar the beauteous plan,
She bade him be—an absent man.
Ever offending, ever fretting,
Ever explaining and forgetting,
He blunders on from day to day,
And drives his nearest friends away.
Do farces meet with flat damnation?—
He's ready with 'congratulation.'
Are friends in office not *quite* pure?—
He 'owns he hates a sinecure.'
Was Major —— in foreign strife
Not *over* prodigal of life?—
He talks about 'the coward's grave.'
And 'who so base as be a slave?'
Is some fair cousin made a wife,
In the full autumn of her life?—
He's sure to shock the *youthful* bride
With 'forty years, come Whitsuntide!'

He wanders round. I'll act the spy
Upon his fatal courtesy,
Which always gives the greatest pain,
Where most it strives to entertain:—
'Edward, my boy! an age has passed
Methinks, since Reuben saw you last;
How fares the Abbey? and the rooks?
Your tenants? and your sister's looks?

Lovely and fascinating still,
 With lips that wound and eyes that kill?
 When last I saw her dangerous face,
 There was a lover in the case—
 A pretty pair of epaulettes!—
 But then, there were some ugly debts!—
 A match?—nay! why so gloomy, boy?
 Upon my life I wish 'em joy!

With arms enfolded o'er his breast,
 And fingers clenched, and lips compressed,
 And eye, whose every glance appears
 To speak a threat in Reuben's ears,
 That youth hath heard; 'tis brief and stern,
 The answer that he deigns return;
 Then silent on his homeward way,
 Like Ossian's ghosts, he strides away.

Astonished at his indignation,
 Reuben breaks out in exclamation.
 'Edward! I mean—I really meant—
 Upon my word!—a compliment;
 You look so stern!—nay, why is this?
 Angry because I flattered Miss?
 What! gone?—the deuce is in the man!
 Explain, Sir Robert, if you can.'—
 'Eh! what? perhaps you haven't heard,—
 Excuse my laughing—how absurd!
 A slight *faux pas*!—a trifle merely!
 Ha! ha!—egad, you touched him nearly!'

All blunderers, when they chance to make
In colloquy some small mistake,
Make haste to make a hundred more
To mend the one they made before.
'Tis thus with Reuben; through the throng
With hurried steps he hastes along;
Thins, like a pest, the crowded seats,
And runs a muck at all he meets,
Rich in his unintended satire,
And killing where he meant to flatter.
He makes a College Fellow wild
By asking for his wife and child;
Puts a haught Blue in awful passion
By disquisitions on the fashion;
Refers a knotty case in whist
To Morley the philanthropist;
Quotes to a sportsman from St. Luke;
Bawls out plain 'Bobby' to a Duke;
And while a barrister invites
Our notice to the Bill of Rights,
And fat Sir John begins to launch
Into the praises of a haunch,
He bids the man of quibbles pause
By eulogizing 'Spartan Laws,'
And makes the epicure quite wroth
By eulogising 'Spartan broth.'
Error on error grows and swells;—
For, as a certain proverb tells,
'When once a man has lost his way,'—
But you have read it,—or you may.

Girt with a crowd of listening Graces,
 With expectation on their faces,
 Chattering, and looking all the while
 As if he strove to hide a smile
 That fain would burst Decorum's bands,
 Alfred Duval, the hoaxer, stands.
 Alfred! the eldest born of Mirth;
 There is not on this nether earth
 So light a spirit, nor a soul
 So little used to all control.
 Frolic and fun and jest and glee
 Burst round him unremittingly,
 And in the glances of his eyes
 Ever his heart's good humour flies,
 Mild as the breezes of the South;
 And while from many a wiser mouth
 We drink the fruits of education,
 The solid Port of conversation,
 From Alfred's lips we seem to drain
 A ceaseless flow of bright Champagne.
 In various shapes his wit is found;
 But most it loves to send around
 O'er half the town, on Rumour's gale,
 Some marvellously fashioned tale,
 And cheat the unsuspecting ear
 With groundless hope, or groundless fear.
 To speak in civil words, his bent
 Lies sadly to—embellishment.
 'Sir,' says Morality, 'you know
 You shouldn't flatter Falsehood so:

The nurse that rocked you in your crib
Taught you to loathe and scorn a fib;
And Shakspeare warns you of the evil,
Saying—"Tell truth, and shame the devil!"
I like, as well as you, the glances
Where gay good humour brightly dances;
But when a man tells horrid lies,—
You shouldn't talk about his eyes.'
Madam! you'll think it rather odd,
That, while I bow me to the rod,
And make no shadow of defence,
I still persist in my offence:
And great and small may join to blame
The echo of the hoaxer's fame;
But, be it known to great and small,—
I can't write sermons at a ball.

'Tis Alfred fills the public prints
With all the sly ingenious hints
That fly about, begirt with cares,
And terrify the Bulls and Bears.
Unrivalled statesman! war and peace
He makes and breaks with perfect ease;
Skilful to crown and to depose,
He sets up kings, and overthrows;
As if apprenticed to the work,
He ties the bowstring round the Turk,
Or makes the Algerine devout,
Or plagues his Holiness with gout,
Or drives the Spaniard from Madrid
As quick as Bonapartè did.

Sometimes at home his plots he lays,
 And wildly still his fancy plays ;
 He pulls the Speaker from the chair,
 Murders the Sheriffs, or the Mayor,
 Or drags a Bishop through the mire,
 Or sets the theatres on fire,
 Or brings the weavers to subjection,
 Or prates of mobs and insurrection.
 One dash of his creative pen
 Can raise a hundred thousand men :
 They march ! he wills, and myriads fall ;—
 One dash annihilates them all !

And now, amid that female rout,
 What scandal doth he buzz about ?
 What grand affair or mighty name
 Entrusts he to the gossip Fame ?
 Unchecked, unstayed, he hurries on
 With wondrous stories of the *Tou* ;
 Describes how London ladies lose
 Their heads in helmets—like the Blues,
 And how the highest circles meet
 To dance with pattens on their feet !
 And all the while he tells his lie
 With such a solemn gravity,
 That many a Miss parades the room
 Dreaming about a casque and plume,
 And vows it grievously must tire one
 To waltz upon a pump of iron.

Jacques, the Cantab! I see him brood,
Wrapt in his mental solitude,
On thoughts that lie too deep, I wis,
For such a scene and hour as this.
Now shall the rivers freeze in May,
Coquettes be silent at the play ;
Old men shall dine without a story,
And mobs be civil to a Tory !
All miracles shall well befall,
When Youth is thoughtful at a ball.

From thoughts that grieve, and words that vex,
And names invented to perplex ;
From latent findings, never found,
And mystic figures, square and round ;
Shapes, from whose labyrinthine toil
A Daedalus might well recoil,
He steals one night—one single night—
And gives its moments to delight.
Yet still upon his struggling soul
The muddy wave of Cam will roll,
And all the monsters grim, that float
Upon that dark and murky moat,
Come jabbering round him,—dark equation,
Subtle distinction, disputation ;
Notion, idea, mystic schism,
Assumption, proof, and syllogism,
And many an old and awful name
Of optic or mechanic fame.
Look! in the van stern Euclid shows
The Asses'-Bridge upon his nose ;

Bacon comes forward, sage austere,
 And Locke and Paley both are there;
 And Newton, with a spiteful hiss,
 Points to his '*De Principiis*.'
 Yet often with his magic wand
 Doth Mirth dispel that hideous band;
 And then in strange confusion lost
 The mind of Jacques is tempest-tossed:
 By turns around it come and flee
 The *dulce* and the *utile*;
 By turns, as Thought or Pleasure wills,
 Quadratics struggle with quadrilles;
 And figures sour and figures sweet,
 Of problems—and of dances—meet;
 Bisections fight with 'down the middle's,
 And chords of arcs with chords of fiddles;
 Vain are the poor musician's graces;
 His bass gives way to given bases—
 His studied trill to shapely trine—
 His mellowed shake to puzzling sine:
 Each forming set recalls a vision
 Of some enchanting proposition,
 And merry '*Chassez-croisés huit*'
 Is little more than Q. E. D.
 Ah Stoic youth! before his eye
 Bright beauties walk unheeded by
 And, while his distant fancy strays
 Remote through Algebraic maze,
 He sees in whatsoever he views
 The very object he pursues;

And fairest forms, from heel to head,
 Seem crooked as his *x* and *z*.
 Peace to the man of marble!—

Hush !

Whence is the universal rush ?
 Why doth confusion thus affright
 The peaceful order of the night,
 Thwart the musicians in their task,
 And check the schoolboy's *pas de basque* ?
 The Lady Clare hath lost a comb !—
 If old Queen Bess from out her tomb
 Had burst, with royal indignation,
 Upon our scandalous flirtation,
 Darted a glance immensely chilling
 Upon our waltzing and quadrilling,
 Flown at the fiddlers in a pet,
 And bade them play her minuet ;
 Her stately step and angry eye,
 Her waist so low, her neck so high,
 Her habit of inspiring fear,
 Her knack of boxing on the ear,
 Could ne'er have made the people stare
 Like the lost comb of Lady Clare !
 The tresses it was wont to bind
 Joy in their freedom ! unconfined
 They float around her, and bedeck
 The marble whiteness of her neck
 With veil of more resplendent hue
 Than ever Aphrodite threw

Around her, when unseen she trod
 Before the sight of man or god.
 Look, how a blush of burning red
 O'er bosom and o'er forehead spread
 Glances like lightning! and aside
 The Lady Clare hath turned her head,
 As if she strove in vain to hide
 That countenance of modest pride,
 Whose colour many an envying fair
 Would give a monarch's crown to wear.
 Persuasion lurks on woman's tongue:
 In woman's smile, oh! raptures throng;
 And woman's tears compassion move,—
 But, oh! 'tis woman's blush we love!

Now gallantry is busy round:
 All eyes are bent upon the ground;
 And dancers leave the cheerful measure
 To seek the Lady's missing treasure.
 Meanwhile, some charitable Miss,
 Quite ignorant what envy is,
 Sends slowly forth her censures grave.
 'How oddly beauties will behave!
 Oh! quite an accident!—last year
 I think she sprained her ankle here;
 And then there were such sudden halts,
 And such a bringing out of salts.'—
 'You think her vain?'—'Oh gracious, no!
 She has a charming foot, you know;
 And it's so pretty to be lame;—
 I don't impute the slightest blame,—

Only, that *very* careless braid!—
The fault is with the waiting-maid :
I merely mean, since Lady Clare
Was flattered so about her hair,
Her comb is always dropping out—
Oh ! quite an accident !—no doubt !’

The sun hath risen o’er the deep,
And fathers, more than half asleep,
Begin to shake the drowsy head,
And hint—‘It’s time to be in bed.’
Then comes chagrin on faces fair ;
Soft hands are clasped in mimic prayer ;
And then the warning watch is shown,
And answers in a harsher tone
Reply to look of lamentation,
And argument, and supplication :
In vain sweet voices tell their grief,
In speeches long, for respite brief ;
Bootless are all their ‘Lord!’s and ‘La!’s,
Their ‘Pray, Papa!’s and ‘Do, Papa!’s ;
‘Ladies,’ quoth Gout, ‘I love my rest ;’
The carriage waits!—*eundum est.*’
This is the hour for parting bow,
This is the hour for secret vow ;
For weighty shawl, and hooded cloak,
Half-uttered tale, and whispered joke :
This is the hour when ladies bright
Relate the adventures of the night,
And fly by turns from truth to fiction,
From retrospection to prediction :

They regulate with unbought bounty
 The destinies of half the county;
 With gipsy talent they foretell
 How Miss Duquesne will marry well,
 And how 'tis certain that the Squire
 Will be more stupid than his sire,
 And how the girl they cried up so,
 Only two little months ago,
 Falls off already, and will be
 Really quite plain at twenty-three.

Now Scandal hovers, laughing, o'er them,
 While pass in long review before them,
 'The lady that my lord admires'—
 'The gentleman that moves on wires'—
 The youth 'with such a frightful frown!'—
 And 'that extraordinary gown!'

Now characters are much debated,
 And witty speeches are narrated;
 And Criticism delights to dwell
 On conquests won by many a belle,
 On compliments that ne'er were paid,
 On offers that were never made,
 Refusals—Lord knows when refused,
 Deductions—Lord knows how deduced;
 Alas! how sweetly scandal falls
 From lips of beauties—after balls!
 The music stops—the lights expire—
 The dance is o'er—the crowds retire,
 And all those smiling cheeks have flown!
 Away!—the Rhymer is alone.

Thou too, the fairest and the best,
 Hast fled from him with the rest;
 Thy name he will not, love! unite
 To the rude strain he pours to-night;
 Yet often hath he turned away
 Amidst his harsh and wandering lay,
 And often hath his earnest eye
 Looked into thine delightedly,
 And often hath his listening ear—

But thou art gone!—what doth he here?

LAURA

For she in shape and beauty did excel
 All other idols that the heathen do adore:

And all about her altar scattered lay
 Great sorts of lovers piteously complaining.

SPENSER.

A LOOK as blithe, a step as light,
 As fabled nymph or fairy sprite;
 A voice, whose every word and tone
 Might make a thousand hearts its own;
 A brow of fervour, and a mien
 Bright with the hopes of gay fifteen;
 These, loved and lost one! these were thine,
 When first I bowed at Beauty's shrine.
 But I have torn my wavering soul
 From woman's proud and weak control;

The fane where I so often knelt,
 The flame my heart so truly felt,
 Are visions of another time,
 Themes for my laughter—and my rhyme.

She saw and conquered ; in her eye
 There was a careless cruelty
 That shone destruction, while it seemed
 Unconscious of the fire it beamed.
 And oh ! that negligence of dress,
 That wild infantine playfulness,
 That archness of the trifling brow
 That could command—we knew not how—
 Were links of gold, that held me then
 In bonds I may not bear again ;
 For dearer to an honest heart
 Is childhood's mirth than woman's art.

Already many an aged dame,
 Skilful in scandalizing fame,
 Foresaw the reign of Laura's face,
 Her sway, her folly, and disgrace :
 Minding the beauty of the day
 More than her partner, or her play,—
 'Laura a beauty?—flippant chit!
 I vow I hate her forward wit!'—
 ('I lead a club')—'Why, ma'am, between us,
 Her mother thinks her quite a Venus ;
 But every parent loves, you know,
 To make a pigeon of her crow.'—

Some folks are apt to look too high :
She has a dukedom in her eye.'—
'The girl is straight,'—('we call the ace')—
'But that's the merit of her stays.'—
'I'm sure I loathe malicious hints—
But—only look, how Laura squints!'—
'Yet Miss, forsooth,'—('who played the ten?')—
'Is quite perfection with the men,—
The flattering fools—they make me sick!'—
('Well—four by honours, and the trick!')

While thus the crones hold high debate
On Laura's charms and Laura's fate,
A few short years have rolled along,
And—first in pleasure's idle throng—
Laura, in ripened beauty proud,
Smiles haughty on the flattering crowd ;
Her sex's envy, Fashion's boast,
An heiress, and a reigning toast.

The circling waltz and gay quadrille
Are in, or out, at Laura's will ;
The tragic bard and comic wit
Heed not the critic in the pit,
If Laura's undisputed sway
Ordains full houses to the play ;
And fair ones of a humbler fate,
That envy, while they imitate,
From Laura's whisper strive to guess
The changes of inconstant dress.

Where'er her step in beauty moves,
 Around her fly a thousand loves ;
 A thousand graces go before,
 While striplings wonder and adore :
 And some are wounded by a sigh,
 Some by the lustre of her eye ;
 And these her studied smiles ensnare,
 And these the ringlets of her hair.

The first his fluttering heart to lose
 Was Captain Piercy, of the Blues ;
 He squeezed her hand, he gazed, and swore
 He never was in love before :
 He entertained his charmer's ear
 With tales of wonder and of fear ;
 Talked much and long of siege and fight,
 Marches by day, alarms by night :
 And Laura listened to the story,
 Whether it spoke of love or glory ;
 For many an anecdote had he
 Of combat, and of gallantry,
 Of long blockades and sharp attacks,
 Of bullets and of bivouacs,
 Of towns o'ercome—and ladies too,—
 Of billet—and of billet-doux,
 Of nunneries—and escalades,
 And damsels—and Damascus blades.

Alas ! too soon the captain found
 How swiftly Fortune's wheel goes round :

Laura at last began to doze
 Even in the midst of Badajoz,
 And hurried to a game at loo
 From Wellington and Waterloo.
 The hero, in heroics left,
 Of fortune and a wife bereft,
 With nought to cheer his close of day
 But celibacy and half pay,
 Since Laura and his stars were cruel,
 Sought his quietus in a duel.

He fought and perished: Laura sighed
 To hear how hapless Piercy died,
 And wiped her eyes, and thus expressed
 The feelings of her tender breast:—
 ‘What? dead!—poor fellow—what a pity!
 He was *so* handsome, and *so* witty:
 Shot in a duel too!—good gracious!
 How I did hate that man’s mustachios!’

Next came the interesting beau,
 The trifling youth, Frivolio;
 He came to see and to be seen,
 Grace and good breeding in his mien;
 Shone all Delcroix upon his head;
 The West-end spoke in all he said;
 And in his neckcloth’s studied fold
 Sat Fashion on a throne of gold.
 He came, impatient to resign
 What heart he had at Laura’s shrine:

Though deep in self-conceit encased,
 He learnt to bow to Laura's taste;
 Consulted her on new quadrilles,
 Spot waistcoats, lavender, and gills:
 As willed the proud and fickle fair
 He tied his cloth and curled his hair;
 Varied his manners—or his clothes,
 And changed his tailor—or his oaths.

Oh! how did Laura love to vex
 The fair one of the other sex!
 For him she practised every art
 That captivates and plagues the heart.
 Did he bring tickets for the play?
 No—Laura had the spleen to-day.
 Did he escort her to the ball?
 No—Laura would not dance at all.
 Did he look grave?—'The fool was sad.'
 Was he jocose?—'The man was mad.'
 E'en when he knelt before her feet,
 And there, in accents soft and sweet,
 Laid rank and fortune, heart and hand,
 At Laura's absolute command,—
 Instead of blushing her consent,
 She 'wondered what the blockhead meant.'

Yet still the fashionable fool
 Was proud of Laura's ridicule;
 Though still despised, he still pursued,
 In ostentatious servitude;

Seeming, like lady's lap-dog, vain
Of being led by Beauty's chain.
He knelt, he gazed, he sighed and swore,
While 'twas the fashion to adore ;
When years had passed, and Laura's frown
Had ceased to terrify the town,
He hurried from the fallen Grace
To idolize a newer face.
Constant to nothing was the ass,
Save to his follies, and his glass.

The next to gain the beauty's ear
Was William Lisle, the sonneteer ;
Well deemed the prince of rhyme and blank ;
For long and deeply had he drank
Of Helicon's poetic tide,
Where nonsense flows, and numbers glide,
And slumbered on the herbage green
That decks the banks of Hippocrene.
In short—his very footmen know it—
William is mad—or else a poet.¹

He came and rhymed ; he talked of fountains,
Of Pindus, and Pierian mountains,
Of wandering lambs, of gurgling rills,
And roses, and Castalian hills ;
He thought a lover's vow grew sweeter
When it meandered into metre,
And planted every speech with flowers
Fresh blooming from Aonian bowers.

¹ Aut insanit homo,—aut versus facit.—HORACE.

' Laura, I perish for your sake !'
 (Here he digressed about a lake)—
 ' The charms thy features all disclose '—
 (A simile about a rose)—
 ' Have set my very soul on fire ;'
 (An episode about his lyre)—
 ' Though you despise, I still must love ;'
 (Something about a turtle dove)—
 ' Alas ! in death's unstartled sleep '—
 (Just here he did his best to weep)—
 ' Laura, the willow soon shall wave
 Over thy lover's lowly grave.'
 Then he began with pathos due
 To speak of cypress and of rue :
 But fortune's unforeseen award
 Parted the beauty from the bard ;
 For Laura, in that evil hour
 When unpropitious stars had power,
 Unmindful of the thanks she owed,
 Lighted her taper with an ode !
 Poor William all his vows forgot,
 And hurried from the fatal spot
 In all the bitterness of quarrel,
 To write lampoons, and dream of laurel.

Years fled by, and every grace
 Began to fade from Laura's face ;
 Through every circle whispers ran,
 And aged dowagers began
 To gratify their secret spite :—
 ' How shocking Laura looks to-night !

We know her waiting-maid is clever,
But rouge won't make one young for ever ;
Laura should think of being sage,
You know she's of a *certain* age.'

Her wonted wit began to fail,
Her eyes grew dim, her features pale,
Her fame was past, her race was done ;
Her lovers left her one by one ;
Her slaves diminished by degrees,
They ceased to fawn, as she to please.
Last of the gay deceitful crew
Chremes, the usurer, withdrew ;
By many an art he strove to net
The guineas of the rich coquette,
But (so the adverse fates decreed)
Chremes and Laura disagreed ;
For Chremes talked too much of stocks,
And Laura of her opera-box.
Unhappy Laura ! sadness marred
What tints of beauty time had spared ;
For all her wide extended sway
Had faded like a dream away,
And they that loved her passed her by
With altered or averted eye.
That silent scorn, that chilling air,
The fallen tyrant could not bear ;
She could not live when none admired,
And perished, as her reign expired.

I gazed upon that lifeless form
 So late with hope and fancy warm,—
 That pallid brow,—that eye of jet
 Where lustre seemed to linger yet,
 Where sparkled through an auburn tress
 The last dim light of loveliness,
 Whose trembling ray was only seen
 To bid us sigh for what had been.
 Alas! I said my wavering soul
 Was torn from woman's weak control;
 But when, amid the evening's gloom,
 I looked on Laura's early tomb,
 And thought on her, so bright and fair,
 That slumbered in oblivion there,
 That calm resolve I could not keep,
 And then I wept,—as now I weep.

EVERY DAY CHARACTERS

I

THE VICAR

SOME years ago, ere time and taste
 Had turned our parish topsy-turvy,
 When Darnel Park was Darnel Waste,
 And roads as little known as scurvy,
 The man who lost his way, between
 St. Mary's Hill and Sandy Thicket,
 Was always shown across the green,
 And guided to the Parson's wicket.

Back flew the bolt of lissom lath ;
Fair Margaret, in her tidy kirtle,
Led the lorn traveller up the path,
Through clean-clipt rows of box and myrtle ;
And Don and Sancho, Tramp and Tray,
Upon the parlour steps collected,
Wagged all their tails, and seemed to say—
'Our master knows you—you're expected.'

Uprose the Reverend Dr. Brown,
Uprose the Doctor's winsome marrow ;
The lady laid her knitting down,
Her husband clasped his ponderous Barrow ;
Whate'er the stranger's caste or creed,
Pundit or Papist, saint or sinner,
He found a stable for his steed,
And welcome for himself, and dinner.

If, when he reached his journey's end,
And warmed himself in Court or College,
He had not gained an honest friend
And twenty curious scraps of knowledge,—
If he departed as he came,
With no new light on love or liquor,—
Good sooth, the traveller was to blame,
And not the Vicarage, nor the Vicar.

His talk was like a stream, which runs
With rapid change from rocks to roses :
It slipped from politics to puns,
It passed from Mahomet to Moses ;

Beginning with the laws which keep
 The planets in their radiant courses,
 And ending with some precept deep
 For dressing eels, or shoeing horses.

He was a shrewd and sound Divine,
 Of loud Dissent the mortal terror;
 And when, by dint of page and line,
 He 'stablished Truth, or startled Error,
 The Baptist found him far too deep;
 The Deist sighed with saving sorrow;
 And the lean Levite went to sleep,
 And dreamed of tasting pork to-morrow.

His sermon never said or showed
 That Earth is foul, that Heaven is gracious,
 Without refreshment on the road
 From Jerome, or from Athanasius:
 And sure a righteous zeal inspired
 The hand and head that penned and planned them,
 For all who understood admired,
 And some who did not understand them.

He wrote, too, in a quiet way,
 Small treatises, and smaller verses,
 And sage remarks on chalk and clay,
 And hints to noble Lords—and nurses;
 True histories of last year's ghost,
 Lines to a ringlet, or a turban,
 And trifles for the Morning Post,
 And nothings for Sylvanus Urban.

He did not think all mischief fair,
Although he had a knack of joking ;
He did not make himself a bear,
Although he had a taste for smoking ;
And when religious sects ran mad,
He held, in spite of all his learning,
That if a man's belief is bad,
It will not be improved by burning.

And he was kind, and loved to sit
In the low hut or garnished cottage,
And praise the farmer's homely wit,
And share the widow's homelier pottage :
At his approach complaint grew mild ;
And when his hand unbarred the shutter,
The clammy lips of fever smiled
The welcome which they could not utter.

He always had a tale for me
Of Julius Caesar, or of Venus ;
From him I learnt the rule of three,
Cat's cradle, leap-frog, and *Quae genus* :
I used to singe his powdered wig,
To steal the staff he put such trust in,
And make the puppy dance a jig,
When he began to quote Augustine.

Alack the change ! in vain I look
For haunts in which my boyhood trifled,—
The level lawn, the trickling brook,
The trees I climbed, the beds I rifled :

The church is larger than before ;
 You reach it by a carriage entry ;
 It holds three hundred people more,
 And pews are fitted up for gentry.

Sit in the Vicar's seat : you'll hear
 The doctrine of a gentle Johnian,
 Whose hand is white, whose tone is clear,
 Whose phrase is very Ciceronian.
 Where is the old man laid?—look down,
 And construe on the slab before you,
 ' *Hic jacet GVLIELMVS BROWN,*
Vir nullâ non donandus lauru.'

(1829.)

II

QUINCE

Fallentis semita vitæ.—HOR.

NEAR a small village in the West,
 Where many very worthy people
 Eat, drink, play whist, and do their best
 To guard from evil Church and steeple
 There stood—alas! it stands no more!—
 A tenement of brick and plaster,
 Of which, for forty years and four,
 My good friend Quince was lord and master.

Welcome was he in hut and hall
To maids and matrons, peers and peasants ;
He won the sympathies of all
By making puns, and making presents.
Though all the parish were at strife,
He kept his counsel, and his carriage,
And laughed, and loved a quiet life,
And shrank from Chancery suits—and marriage.

Sound was his claret—and his head ;
Warm was his double ale—and feelings ;
His partners at the whist club said
That he was faultless in his dealings :
He went to church but once a week ;
Yet Dr. Poundtext always found him
An upright man, who studied Greek,
And liked to see his friends around him.

Asylums, hospitals and schools,
He used to swear, were made to cozen ;
All who subscribed to them were fools,—
And he subscribed to half-a-dozen :
It was his doctrine, that the poor
Were always able, never willing ;
And so the beggar at his door
Had first abuse, and then—a shilling.

Some public principles he had,
But was no flatterer, nor fretter ;
He rapped his box when things were bad,
And said 'I cannot make them better !'

And much he loathed the patriot's snort,
 And much he scorned the placeman's snuffle;
 And cut the fiercest quarrels short
 With—'Patience, gentlemen—and shuffle!'

For full ten years his pointer Speed
 Had couched beneath her master's table;
 For twice ten years his old white steed
 Had fattened in his master's stable;
 Old Quince averred, upon his troth,
 They were the ugliest beasts in Devon;
 And none knew why he fed them both,
 With his own hands, six days in seven.

Whene'er they heard his ring or knock,
 Quicker than thought, the village slatterns
 Flung down the novel, smoothed the frock,
 And took up Mrs. Glasse, and patterns;
 Adine was studying baker's bills;
 Louisa looked the queen of knitters;
 Jane happened to be hemming frills;
 And Bell, by chance, was making fritters.

But all was vain; and while decay
 Came, like a tranquil moonlight, o'er him,
 And found him gouty still, and gay,
 With no fair nurse to bless or bore him,
 His rugged smile and easy chair,
 His dread of matrimonial lectures,
 His wig, his stick, his powdered hair,
 Were themes for very strange conjectures.

Some sages thought the stars above
Had crazed him with excess of knowledge ;
Some heard he had been crost in love
Before he came away from College ;
Some darkly hinted that his Grace
Did nothing, great or small, without him ;
Some whispered, with a solemn face,
That there was 'something odd about him !'

I found him, at threescore and ten,
A single man, but bent quite double ;
Sickness was coming on him then
To take him from a world of trouble :
He prosed of slipping down the hill,
Discovered he grew older daily ;
One frosty day he made his will,—
The next, he sent for Doctor Bailey.

And so he lived,—and so he died !—
When last I sat beside his pillow
He shook my hand, and 'Ah !' he cried,
'Penelope must wear the willow.
Tell her I hugged her rosy chain
While life was flickering in the socket ;
And say, that when I call again,
I'll bring a licence in my pocket.

'I've left my house and grounds to Fag,—
I hope his master's shoes will suit him ;
And I've bequeathed to you my nag,
To feed him for my sake,—or shoot him.

The Vicar's wife will take old Fox,—
 She'll find him an uncommon mouser,—
 And let her husband have my box,
 My Bible, and my Assmanshauser.

'Whether I ought to die or not,
 My Doctors cannot quite determine;
 It's only clear that I shall rot,
 And be, like Priam, food for vermin.
 My debts are paid:—but Nature's debt
 Almost escaped my recollection:
 Tom!—we shall meet again;—and yet
 I cannot leave you my direction!'

(1829.)

III

THE BELLE OF THE BALL-ROOM

Il faut juger des femmes depuis la chaussure jusqu'à la coiffure exclusivement, à peu près comme on mesure le poisson entre queue et tête.—LA BRUYÈRE.

YEARS—years ago,—ere yet my dreams
 Had been of being wise or witty,—
 Ere I had done with writing themes,
 Or yawned o'er this infernal Chitty;—
 Years—years ago,—while all my joy
 Was in my fowling-piece and filly,—
 In short, while I was yet a boy,
 I fell in love with Laura Lily.

I saw her at the County Ball:

There, when the sounds of flute and fiddle
Gave signal sweet in that old hall

Of hands across and down the middle,
Hers was the subtlest spell by far

Of all that set young hearts romancing;
She was our queen, our rose, our star;

And then she danced—O Heaven, her dancing!

Dark was her hair, her hand was white;

Her voice was exquisitely tender;

Her eyes were full of liquid light;

I never saw a waist so slender!

Her every look, her every smile,

Shot right and left a score of arrows;

I thought 'twas Venus from her isle,

And wondered where she'd left her sparrows.

She talked,—of politics or prayers,—

Of Southey's prose or Wordsworth's sonnets,—

Of danglers—or of dancing bears,

Of battles—or the last new bonnets,

By candlelight, at twelve o'clock,

To me it mattered not a tittle;

If those bright lips had quoted Locke,

I might have thought they murmured Little.

Through sunny May, through sultry June,

I loved her with a love eternal;

I spoke her praises to the moon,

I wrote them to the Sunday Journal:

My mother laughed; I soon found out
 That ancient ladies have no feeling;
 My father frowned; but how should gout
 See any happiness in kneeling?

She was the daughter of a Dean,
 Rich, fat, and rather apoplectic;
 She had one brother, just thirteen,
 Whose colour was extremely hectic;
 Her grandmother for many a year
 Had fed the parish with her bounty;
 Her second cousin was a peer,
 And Lord Lieutenant of the County.

But titles, and the three per cents.,
 And mortgages, and great relations,
 And India bonds, and tithes, and rents,
 Oh what are they to love's sensations?
 Black eyes, fair forehead, clustering locks—
 Such wealth, such honours, Cupid chooses;
 He cares as little for the Stocks,
 As Baron Rothschild for the Muses.

She sketched; the vale, the wood, the beach,
 Grew lovelier from her pencil's shading:
 She botanized; I envied each
 Young blossom in her boudoir fading:
 She warbled Handel; it was grand;
 She made the Catalani jealous:
 She touched the organ; I could stand
 For hours and hours to blow the bellows.

She kept an album, too, at home,
 Well filled with all an album's glories;
 Paintings of butterflies, and Rome,
 Patterns for trimmings, Persian stories;
 Soft songs to Julia's cockatoo,
 Fierce odes to Famine and to Slaughter,
 And autographs of Prince Leboo,
 And recipes for elder-water.

And she was flattered, worshipped, bored;
 Her steps were watched, her dress was noted;
 Her poodle dog was quite adored,
 Her sayings were extremely quoted;
 She laughed, and every heart was glad,
 As if the taxes were abolished;
 She frowned, and every look was sad,
 As if the Opera were demolished.

She smiled on many, just for fun,—
 I knew that there was nothing in it;
 I was the first—the only one
 Her heart had thought of for a minute.—
 I knew it, for she told me so,
 In phrase which was divinely moulded;
 She wrote a charming hand,—and oh!
 How sweetly all her notes were folded!

Our love was like most other loves;—
 A little glow, a little shiver,
 A rose-bud, and a pair of gloves,
 And 'Fly not yet'—upon the river;

Some jealousy of some one's heir,
 Some hopes of dying broken-hearted,
 A miniature, a lock of hair,
 The usual vows,—and then we parted.

We parted; months and years rolled by;
 We met again four summers after:
 Our parting was all sob and sigh;
 Our meeting was all mirth and laughter:
 For in my heart's most secret cell
 There had been many other lodgers;
 And she was not the ball-room's Belle,
 But only—Mrs. Something Rogers!

(1830.)

THE CHAUNT OF THE BRAZEN HEAD

Brazen companion of my solitary hours! do you, while I recline, pronounce a prologue to those sentiments of wisdom and virtue, which are hereafter to be the oracles of statesmen, and the guides of philosophers. Give me to-night a proem of our essay, an opening of our case, a division of our subject. Speak! —(*Slow music. The Friar falls asleep. The Head chaunts as follows.*)—
 THE BRAZEN HEAD.

I THINK, whatever mortals crave,
 With impotent endeavour,—
 A wreath, a rank, a throne, a grave,—
 The world goes round for ever:

I think that life is not too long ;
 And therefore I determine,
 That many people read a song
 Who will not read a sermon.

I think you've looked through many hearts,
 And mused on many actions,
 And studied Man's component parts,
 And Nature's compound fractions :
 I think you've picked up truth by bits
 From foreigner and neighbour ;
 I think the world has lost its wits,
 And you have lost your labour.

I think the studies of the wise,
 The hero's noisy quarrel,
 The majesty of Woman's eyes,
 The poet's cherished laurel,
 And all that makes us lean or fat,
 And all that charms or troubles,—
 This bubble is more bright than that,
 But still they all are bubbles.

I think the thing you call Renown,
 The unsubstantial vapour
 For which the soldier burns a town,
 The sonneteer a taper,
 Is like the mist which, as he flies,
 The horseman leaves behind him ;
 He cannot mark its wreaths arise,
 Or if he does they blind him.

I think one nod of Mistress Chance
 Makes creditors of debtors,
 And shifts the funeral for the dance,
 The sceptre for the fetters :
 I think that Fortune's favoured guest
 May live to gnaw the platters,
 And he that wears the purple vest
 May wear the rags and tatters.

I think the Tories love to buy
 'Your Lordship's and 'your Grace's,
 By loathing common honesty,
 And lauding commonplaces :
 I think that some are very wise,
 And some are very funny,
 And some grow rich by telling lies,
 And some by telling money.

I think the Whigs are wicked knaves—
 (And very like the Tories)—
 Who doubt that Britain rules the waves,
 And ask the price of glories :
 I think that many fret and fume
 At what their friends are planning,
 And Mr. Hume hates Mr. Brougham
 As much as Mr. Canning.

I think that friars and their hoods,
 Their doctrines and their maggots,
 Have lighted up too many feuds,
 And far too many faggots :

I think, while zealots fast and frown,
 And fight for two or seven,
 That there are fifty roads to Town,
 And rather more to Heaven.

I think that, thanks to Paget's lance,
 And thanks to Chester's learning,
 The hearts that burned for fame in France
 At home are safe from burning:
 I think the Pope is on his back;
 And, though 'tis fun to shake him,
 I think the Devil not so black
 As many people make him.

I think that Love is like a play,
 Where tears and smiles are blended,
 Or like a faithless April day,
 Whose shine with shower is ended:
 Like Colnbrook pavement, rather rough,
 Like trade, exposed to losses,
 And like a Highland plaid,—all stuff,
 And very full of crosses.

I think the world, though dark it be,
 Has aye one rapturous pleasure
 Concealed in life's monotony,
 For those who seek the treasure;
 One planet in a starless night,
 One blossom on a briar,
 One friend not quite a hypocrite,
 One woman not a liar!

I think poor beggars court St. Giles,
 Rich beggars court St. Stephen;
 And Death looks down with nods and smiles,
 And makes the odds all even:
 I think some die upon the field,
 And some upon the billow,
 And some are laid beneath a shield,
 And some beneath a willow.

I think that very few have sighed
 When Fate at last has found them,
 Though bitter foes were by their side,
 And barren moss around them:
 I think that some have died of drought,
 And some have died of drinking;
 I think that nought is worth a thought,—
 And I'm a fool for thinking!

(1826.)

FROM THE BRAZEN HEAD

A MAN should be tall, a man should be strong,
 His shoulders be broad, his limbs be long;
 He should not be mincing, pretty and petty,
 A booted Miss Molly, a breeched Lady Betty;—
 His brow should be open, his forehead high,
 And beneath them should beam a brilliant eye,
 Softened in love, but oh, in its ire
 Flashing and burning with fearful fire!

His hair should be black ; his beard should be blue ;
And his voice deep, but musical too ;
His lip should be slightly and proudly curled,
As though his spirit defied the world ;
And yet, with this, the radiant light
Of a kindly nature should still unite.
Grace should be his, but not the grace
Which moves with a tutored dancing pace,
But the free, unstudied open air
Which seems as Nature had stamped it there.

On such are turned the fairest eyes,
For such are breathed the softest sighs,
For such the softest words are spoken,
For such the softest hearts are broken ;
For such is the billet of curious fold ;
Such is the ' angel of green and gold '
Whose form appears in the vision of bliss
Which floats o'er the sleep of the maiden miss,
When the charmed cake is hers to dream on,
To call up the shape of her own Philemon !
With such a form does the lonely student—
Beware ! beware ! it is too imprudent—
Invest the hero of dear romance,
A Condé of Spain, a chevalier of France ;
Such the saint—Adam Blair ; such the sinner—Don
 Juan ;
Such the modern Sir Charles, and the ancient Sir Huon ;
Such do poets write a book on ;
Such do ladies love to look on ;

Such do limners love to paint ;
 For such beat pulses fast and faint ;
 For such do young maids lime their twigs ;
 For such do old maids curl their wigs ;
 Such both maid and mistress covet ;
 The young heart dies, that such may love it ;
 For such both fair and foul endeavour—
 Both young and old—both dull and clever ;
 For such both ink and tears are shed
 By each and all—quoth THE BRAZEN HEAD.

GOOD NIGHT TO THE SEASON

So runs the world away.—HAMLET.

GOOD night to the Season ! 'Tis over !
 Gay dwellings no longer are gay ;
 The courtier, the gambler, the lover,
 Are scattered like swallows away :
 There's nobody left to invite one
 Except my good uncle and spouse ;
 My mistress is bathing at Brighton,
 My patron is sailing at Cowes :
 For want of a better enjoyment,
 Till Ponto and Don can get out,
 I'll cultivate rural enjoyment,
 And angle immensely for trout.

Good night to the Season!—the lobbies,
 Their changes, and rumours of change,
 Which startled the rustic Sir Bobbies,
 And made all the Bishops look strange;
 The breaches, and battles, and blunders,
 Performed by the Commons and Peers;
 The Marquis's eloquent blunders,
 The Baronet's eloquent ears;
 Denouncings of Papists and treasons,
 Of foreign dominion and oats;
 Misrepresentations of reasons,
 And misunderstandings of notes.

Good night to the Season!—the buildings
 Enough to make Inigo sick;
 The paintings, and plasterings, and gildings
 Of stucco, and marble, and brick;
 The orders deliciously blended,
 From love of effect, into one;
 The club-houses only intended,
 The palaces only begun;
 The hell, where the fiend in his glory
 Sits staring at putty and stones,
 And scrambles from story to story,
 To rattle at midnight his bones.

Good night to the Season!—the dances,
 The fillings of hot little rooms,
 The glancings of rapturous glances,
 The fancyings of fancy costumes;

The pleasures which fashion makes duties,
 The praisings of fiddles and flutes,
 The luxury of looking at Beauties,
 The tedium of talking to mutes ;
 The female diplomatists, planners
 Of matches for Laura and Jane ;
 The ice of her Ladyship's manners,
 The ice of his Lordship's champagne.

Good night to the Season!—the rages
 Led off by the chiefs of the throng,
 The Lady Matilda's new pages,
 The Lady Eliza's new song ;
 Miss Fennel's macaw, which at Boodle's
 Was held to have something to say ;
 Mrs. Splenetic's musical poodles,
 Which bark '*Batti Batti*' all day ;
 The pony Sir Araby sported,
 As hot and as black as a coal,
 And the Lion his mother imported,
 In bearskins and grease, from the Pole.

Good night to the Season!—the Toso,
 So very majestic and tall ;
 Miss Ayton, whose singing was so-so,
 And Pasta, divinest of all ;
 The labour in vain of the ballet,
 So sadly deficient in stars ;
 The foreigners thronging the Alley,
 Exhaling the breath of cigars ;

The *loge* where some heiress (how killing!)
 Environed with exquisites sits,
 The lovely one out of her drilling,
 The silly ones out of their wits.

Good night to the Season!—the splendour
 That beamed in the Spanish Bazaar;
 Where I purchased—my heart was so tender—
 A card-case, a pasteboard guitar,
 A bottle of perfume, a girdle,
 A lithographed Riego, full-grown,
 Whom bigotry drew on a hurdle
 That artists might draw him on stone;
 A small panorama of Seville,
 A trap for demolishing flies,
 A caricature of the Devil,
 And a look from Miss Sheridan's eyes.

Good night to the Season!—the flowers
 Of the grand horticultural fête,
 When boudoirs were quitted for bowers,
 And the fashion was—not to be late;
 When all who had money and leisure
 Grew rural o'er ices and wines,
 All pleasantly toiling for pleasure,
 All hungrily pining for pines,
 And making of beautiful speeches,
 And marring of beautiful shows,
 And feeding on delicate peaches,
 And treading on delicate toes.

Good night to the Season!—Another
 Will come, with its trifles and toys,
 And hurry away, like its brother,
 In sunshine, and odour, and noise.
 Will it come with a rose or a briar?
 Will it come with a blessing or curse?
 Will its bonnets be lower or higher?
 Will its morals be better or worse?
 Will it find me grown thinner or fatter,
 Or fonder of wrong or of right,
 Or married—or buried?—no matter:
 Good night to the Season—good night!

(AUGUST, 1827.)

A LETTER OF ADVICE

FROM MISS MEDORA TREVILIAN, AT PADUA, TO MISS
 ARAMINTA VAVASOUR, IN LONDON.

Enfin, monsieur, un homme aimable ;
 Voilà pourquoi je ne saurais l'aimer.—SCRIBE.

You tell me you're promised a lover,
 My own Araminta, next week ;
 Why cannot my fancy discover
 The hue of his coat and his cheek ?
 Alas! if he look like another,
 A vicar, a banker, a beau,
 Be deaf to your father and mother,
 My own Araminta, say 'No!'

Miss Lane, at her Temple of Fashion,
Taught us both how to sing and to speak,
And we loved one another with passion,
Before we had been there a week :
You gave me a ring for a token ;
I wear it wherever I go ;
I gave you a chain,—is it broken ?
My own Araminta, say 'No !'

O think of our favourite cottage,
And think of our dear Lalla Rookh !
How we shared with the milkmaids their pottage,
And drank of the stream from the brook ;
How fondly our loving lips faltered
'What further can grandeur bestow ?'
My heart is the same ;—is yours altered ?
My own Araminta, say 'No !'

Remember the thrilling romances
We read on the bank in the glen ;
Remember the suitors our fancies
Would picture for both of us then.
They wore the red cross on their shoulder,
They had vanquished and pardoned their foe—
Sweet friend, are you wiser or colder ?
My own Araminta, say 'No !'

You know, when Lord Rigmarole's carriage
Drove off with your cousin Justine,
You wept, dearest girl, at the marriage,
And whispered 'How base she has been !'

You said you were sure it would kill you,
 If ever your husband looked so;
 And you will not apostatize,—will you?
 My own Araminta, say ‘No!’

When I heard I was going abroad, love,
 I thought I was going to die;
 We walked arm in arm to the road, love,
 We looked arm in arm to the sky;
 And I said ‘When a foreign postilion
 Has hurried me off to the Po,
 Forget not Medora Trevilian:
 My own Araminta, say “No!”’

We parted! but sympathy’s fetters
 Reach far over valley and hill;
 I muse o’er your exquisite letters,
 And feel that your heart is mine still;
 And he who would share it with me, love,—
 The richest of treasures below,—
 If he’s not what Orlando should be, love,
 My own Araminta, say ‘No!’

If he wears a top-boot in his wooing,
 If he comes to you riding a cob,
 If he talks of his baking or brewing,
 If he puts up his feet on the hob,
 If he ever drinks port after dinner,
 If his brow or his breeding is low,
 If he calls himself ‘Thompson’ or ‘Skinner,’
 My own Araminta, say ‘No!’

If he studies the news in the papers
While you are preparing the tea,
If he talks of the damps or the vapours
While moonlight lies soft on the sea,
If he's sleepy while you are capricious,
If he has not a musical 'Oh!'
If he does not call Werther delicious,—
My own Araminta, say 'No!'

If he ever sets foot in the City
Among the stockbrokers and Jews,
If he has not a heart full of pity,
If he don't stand six feet in his shoes,
If his lips are not redder than roses,
If his hands are not whiter than snow,
If he has not the model of noses,—
My own Araminta, say 'No!'

If he speaks of a tax or a duty,
If he does not look grand on his knees,
If he's blind to a landscape of beauty,
Hills, valleys, rocks, waters, and trees,
If he dotes not on desolate towers,
If he likes not to hear the blast blow,
If he knows not the language of flowers,—
My own Araminta, say 'No!'

He must walk—like a god of old story
Come down from the home of his rest;
He must smile—like the sun in his glory
On the buds he loves ever the best;

And oh! from its ivory portal
 Like music his soft speech must flow!—
 If he speak, smile, or walk like a mortal,
 My own Araminta, say 'No!'

Don't listen to tales of his bounty,
 Don't hear what they say of his birth,
 Don't look at his seat in the county,
 Don't calculate what he is worth;
 But give him a theme to write verse on,
 And see if he turns out his toe;
 If he's only an excellent person,—
 My own Araminta, say 'No!'

(1828.)

THE TALENTED MAN

A LETTER FROM A LADY IN LONDON TO A LADY AT
 LAUSANNE

DEAR Alice! you'll laugh when you know it,—
 Last week, at the Duchess's ball,
 I danced with the clever new poet,—
 You've heard of him,—Tully St. Paul.
 Miss Jonquil was perfectly frantic;
 I wish you had seen Lady Anne!
 It really was very romantic,
 He *is* such a talented man!

He came up from Brazen nose College,
Just caught, as they call it, this spring;
And his head, love, is stuffed full of knowledge
Of every conceivable thing.
Of science and logic he chatters,
As fine and as fast as he can;
Though I am no judge of such matters,
I'm sure he's a talented man.

His stories and jests are delightful;—
Not stories or jests, dear, for you;
The jests are exceedingly spiteful,
The stories not always *quite* true.
Perhaps to be kind and veracious
May do pretty well at Lausanne;
But it never would answer,—good gracious!
Chez nous—in a talented man.

He sneers,—how my Alice would scold him!—
At the bliss of a sigh or a tear;
He laughed—only think!—when I told him
How we cried o'er Trevelyan last year;
I vow I was quite in a passion;
I broke all the sticks of my fan;
But sentiment's quite out of fashion,
It seems, in a talented man.

Lady Bab, who is terribly moral,
Has told me that Tully is vain,
And apt—which is silly—to quarrel,
And fond—which is sad—of champagne.

I listened, and doubted, dear Alice,
 For I saw, when my Lady began,
 It was only the Dowager's malice ;—
 She *does* hate a talented man !

He's hideous, I own it. But fame, love,
 Is all that these eyes can adore ;
 He's lame,—but Lord Byron was lame, love,
 And dumpy,—but so is Tom Moore.
 Then his voice,—*such* a voice ! my sweet creature,
 It's like your Aunt Lucy's toucan :
 But oh ! what's a tone or a feature,
 When once one's a talented man ?

My mother, you know, all the season,
 Has talked of Sir Geoffrey's estate ;
 And truly, to do the fool reason,
 He *has* been less horrid of late.
 But to-day, when we drive in the carriage,
 I'll tell her to lay down her plan ;—
 If ever I venture on marriage,
 It must be a talented man !

P. S.—I have found, on reflection,
 One fault in my friend,—*entre nous* ;
 Without it, he'd just be perfection ;—
 Poor fellow, he has not a *sou* !
 And so, when he comes in September
 To shoot with my uncle, Sir Dan,
 I've promised mamma to remember
 He's *only* a talented man !

LETTERS FROM TEIGNMOUTH

OUR BALL

Comment! c'est lui? que je le regarde encore! C'est que vraiment il est bien changé; n'est-ce pas, mon papa?—LES PREMIERS AMOURS.

YOU'LL come to our Ball;—since we parted,
 I've thought of you more than I'll say;
 Indeed, I was half broken-hearted
 For a week, when they took you away.
 Fond fancy brought back to my slumbers
 Our walks on the Ness and the Den,
 And echoed the musical numbers
 Which you used to sing to me then.
 I know the romance, since it's over,
 'Twere idle, or worse, to recall;
 I know you're a terrible rover;
 But Clarence, you'll come to our Ball!

It's only a year, since, at College,
 You put on your cap and your gown;
 But, Clarence, you're grown out of knowledge,
 And changed from the spur to the crown:
 The voice that was best when it faltered
 Is fuller and firmer in tone,
 And the smile that should never have altered—
 Dear Clarence—it is not your own:

Your cravat was badly selected ;
 Your coat don't become you at all ;
 And why is your hair so neglected ?
 You must have it curled for our Ball.

I've often been out upon Haldon
 To look for a covey with pup ;
 I've often been over to Shaldon,
 To see how your boat is laid up :
 In spite of the terrors of Aunty,
 I've ridden the filly you broke ;
 And I've studied your sweet little Dante
 In the shade of your favourite oak :
 When I sat in July to Sir Lawrence,
 I sat in your love of a shawl ;
 And I'll wear what you brought me from Florence,
 Perhaps, if you'll come to our Ball.

You'll find us all changed since you vanished ;
 We've set up a National School ;
 And waltzing is utterly banished,
 And Ellen has married a fool ;
 The Major is going to travel,
 Miss Hyacinth threatens a rout,
 The walk is laid down with fresh gravel,
 Papa is laid up with the gout ;
 And Jane has gone on with her easels,
 And Anne has gone off with Sir Paul ;
 And Fanny is sick with the measles,—
 And I'll tell you the rest at the Ball.

You'll meet all your Beauties; the Lily,
And the Fairy of Willowbrook Farm,
And Lucy, who made me so silly
At Dawlish, by taking your arm;
Miss Manners, who always abused you
For talking so much about Hock,
And her sister, who often amused you
By raving of rebels and Rock
And something which surely would answer,
An heiress quite fresh from Bengal;
So, though you were seldom a dancer,
You'll dance, just for once, at our Ball.

But out on the World! from the flowers
It shuts out the sunshine of truth:
It blights the green leaves in the bowers,
It makes an old age of our youth;
And the flow of our feeling, once in it,
Like a streamlet beginning to freeze,
Though it cannot turn ice in a minute,
Grows harder by sudden degrees:
Time treads o'er the graves of affection;
Sweet honey is turned into gall;
Perhaps you have no recollection
That ever you danced at our Ball!

You once could be pleased with our ballads,—
To-day you have critical ears;
You once could be charmed with our salads—
Alas! you've been dining with Peers;

You trifled and flirted with many,—

You've forgotten the when and the how ;
There was one you liked better than any,—

Perhaps you've forgotten her now.

But of those you remember most newly,

Of those who delight or enthrall,

None love you a quarter so truly

As some you will find at our Ball.

They tell me you've many who flatter,

Because of your wit and your song :

They tell me—and what does it matter?—

You like to be praised by the throng :

They tell me you're shadowed with laurel :

They tell me you're loved by a Blue :

They tell me you're sadly immoral—

Dear Clarence, that cannot be true !

But to me, you are still what I found you,

Before you grew clever and tall ;

And you'll think of the spell that once bound you ;

And you'll come—won't you come?—to our Ball !

(1829.)

PALINODIA

Nec meus hic sermo est, sed quem praecepit—
HORACE.

THERE was a time, when I could feel
 All passion's hopes and fears;
 And tell what tongues can ne'er reveal
 By smiles, and sighs, and tears.
 The days are gone! no more—no more
 The cruel Fates allow;
 And, though I'm hardly twenty-four,—
 I'm not a lover now.

Lady, the mist is on my sight,
 The chill is on my brow;
 My day is night, my bloom is blight;
 I'm not a lover now!

I never talk about the clouds,
 I laugh at girls and boys,
 I'm growing rather fond of crowds,
 And very fond of noise;
 I never wander forth alone
 Upon the mountain's brow;
 I weighed, last winter, sixteen stone;—
 I'm not a lover now!

I never wish to raise a veil,
 I never raise a sigh;
 I never tell a tender tale,
 I never tell a lie:
 I cannot kneel, as once I did;
 I've quite forgot my bow;
 I never do as I am bid;—
 I'm not a lover now!

I make strange blunders every day,
 If I would be gallant;
 Take smiles for wrinkles, black for grey,
 And nieces for their aunt:
 I fly from folly, though it flows
 From lips of loveliest glow;
 I don't object to length of nose;—
 I'm not a lover now!

I find my Ovid very dry,
 My Petrarch quite a pill,
 Cut Fancy for Philosophy,
 Tom Moore for Mr. Mill.
 And belles may read, and beaux may write,—
 I care not who or how;
 I burnt my Album, Sunday night;—
 I'm not a lover now!

I don't encourage idle dreams
 Of poison or of ropes:
 I cannot dine on airy schemes;
 I cannot sup on hopes:

New milk, I own, is very fine,
Just foaming from the cow ;
But yet, I want my pint of wine ;—
I'm not a lover now !

When Laura sings young hearts away,
I'm deafer than the deep ;
When Leonora goes to play,
I sometimes go to sleep ;
When Mary draws her white gloves out,
I never dance, I vow,—
'Too hot to kick one's heels about !'
I'm not a lover now !

I'm busy, now, with state affairs ;
I prate of Pitt and Fox ;
I ask the price of rail-road shares,
I watch the turns of stocks.
And this is life ! no verdure blooms
Upon the withered bough :
I save a fortune in perfumes ;—
I'm not a lover now !

I may be yet, what others are,
A boudoir's babbling fool,
The flattered star of Bench or Bar,
A party's chief, or tool :—
Come shower or sunshine, hope or fear,
The palace or the plough,—
My heart and lute are broken here ;
I'm not a lover now !

Lady, the mist is on my sight,
 The chill is on my brow;
 My day is night, my bloom is blight;
 I'm not a lover now!

(1826.)

SCHOOL AND SCHOOLFELLOWS

Floreat Etona.

TWELVE years ago I made a mock
 Of filthy trades and traffics:
 I wondered what they meant by stock;
 I wrote delightful sapphics;
 I knew the streets of Rome and Troy,
 I supped with Fates and Furies,—
 Twelve years ago I was a boy,
 A happy boy, at Drury's.

Twelve years ago!—how many a thought
 Of faded pains and pleasures
 Those whispered syllables have brought
 From Memory's hoarded treasures!
 The fields, the farms, the bats, the books,
 The glories and disgraces,
 The voices of dear friends, the looks
 Of old familiar faces!

Kind Mater smiles again to me,
 As bright as when we parted ;
 I seem again the frank, the free,
 Stout-limbed, and simple-hearted !
 Pursuing every idle dream,
 And shunning every warning ;
 With no hard work but Bovney stream,
 No chill except Long Morning :

Now stopping Harry Vernon's ball
 That rattled like a rocket ;
 Now hearing Wentworth's ' Fourteen all !'
 And striking for the pocket ;
 Now feasting on a cheese and fitch,—
 Now drinking from the pewter ;
 Now leaping over Chalvey ditch,
 Now laughing at my tutor.

Where are my friends ? I am alone ;
 No playmate shares my beaker :
 Some lie beneath the churchyard stone,
 And some—before the Speaker ;
 And some compose a tragedy,
 And some compose a rondo ;
 And some draw sword for Liberty,
 And some draw pleas for John Doe.

Tom Mill was used to blacken eyes
 Without the fear of sessions ;
 Charles Medlar loathed false quantities,
 As much as false professions ;

Now Mill keeps order in the land,
 A magistrate pedantic ;
 And Medlar's feet repose unscanned
 Beneath the wide Atlantic.

Wild Nick, whose oaths made such a din,
 Does Dr. Martext's duty ;
 And Mullion, with that monstrous chin,
 Is married to a Beauty ;
 And Darrell studies, week by week,
 His Mant, and not his Manton ;
 And Ball, who was but poor at Greek,
 Is very rich at Canton.

And I am eight-and-twenty now ;—
 The world's cold chains have bound me ;
 And darker shades are on my brow,
 And sadder scenes around me :
 In Parliament I fill my seat,
 With many other noodles ;
 And lay my head in Jermyn Street,
 And sip my hock at Boodle's.

But often, when the cares of life
 Have set my temples aching,
 When visions haunt me of a wife,
 When duns await my waking,
 When Lady Jane is in a pet,
 Or Hoby in a hurry,
 When Captain Hazard wins a bet,
 Or Beaulieu spoils a curry,—

For hours and hours I think and talk
 Of each remembered hobby ;
 I long to lounge in Poets' Walk,
 To shiver in the lobby ;
 I wish that I could run away
 From House, and Court, and Levee,
 Where bearded men appear to-day
 Just Eton boys grown heavy,—

That I could bask in childhood's sun
 And dance o'er childhood's roses,
 And find huge wealth in one pound one,
 Vast wit in broken noses,
 And play Sir Giles at Datchet Lane,
 And call the milk-maids Houris,—
 That I could be a boy again,—
 A happy boy,—at Drury's.

(1829.)

A CHILD'S GRAVE

O'ER yon churchyard the storm may lower ;
 But, heedless of the wintry air,
 One little bud shall linger there,
 A still and trembling flower.

Unscathed by long revolving years
 Its tender leaves shall flourish yet,
 And sparkle in the moonlight, wet
 With the pale dew of tears.

And where thine humble ashes lie,
Instead of scutcheon or of stone,
It rises o'er thee, lonely one,
Child of obscurity!

Mild was thy voice as zephyr's breath,
Thy cheek with flowing locks was shaded;
But the voice hath died, the cheek hath faded,
In the cold breeze of Death!

Brightly thine eye was smiling, Sweet!
But now decay hath stilled its glancing;
Warmly thy little heart was dancing,
But it hath ceased to beat!

A few short months—and thou wert here!
Hope sat upon thy youthful brow;
And what is thy memorial now?
A flower—and a tear!

(1821.)

From ATHENS

O FOR the harp which once—but through the strings,
Far o'er the sea, the dismal night-wind sings;
Where is the hand that swept it?—cold and mute
The lifeless Master and the voiceless lute!
The crowded hall, the murmur and the gaze,
The look of envy and the voice of praise,

And friendship's smile, and passion's treasured vow,—
All these are nothing,—life is nothing now!
But the hushed triumph, and the garb of gloom,
The sorrow, deep but mute, around the tomb,
The soldier's silence, and the matron's tear,—
These are the trappings of the sable bier
Which Time corrupts not, Falsehood cannot hide,
Nor Folly scorn, nor Calumny deride.
And 'what is writ, is writ!'—the guilt and shame—
All eyes have seen them, and all lips may blame;
Where is the record of the wrong that stung,
The charm that tempted, and the grief that wrung?
Let feeble hands, iniquitously just,
Rake up the relics of the sinful dust,
Let Ignorance mock the pang it cannot feel,
And Malice brand, what Mercy would conceal;
It matters not! he died as all would die;
Greece had his earliest song, his latest sigh;
And o'er the shrine in which that cold heart sleeps
Glory looks dim, and joyous Conquest weeps.—
The maids of Athens to the spot shall bring
The freshest roses of the new-born spring,
And Spartan boys their first-won wreath shall bear
To bloom round BYRON'S urn, or droop in sadness there!

FROM LUCRETIUS, Bk. ii. l. 1-33.

OH sweet it is to listen on the shore
When the wild tempest mocks the seaboy's cry;
And sweet to mark the tumult and the roar
When distant battle stalks in thunder by:
And do not say another's agony
Is happiness to us!—oh, rather deem
That the mind loves, in its own phantasy,
To wield the weapons and to scream the scream,
And then to wake from death, and feel it was a dream.

But nought is sweeter than to hold our state,
Unchangeable, on Wisdom's guarded keep,
And look in silence on the low and great,
Who, in their sackcloth or their purple, creep
Beneath the summit of the viewless steep:
They dare the deserts, and they tempt the waves,
And serve, and monarchize, and laugh and weep,
While Fortune scoffs alike at lords and slaves,
And decks the perilous path with sceptres, and with
graves.

Oh wretched souls! oh weak and wasted breath,
Painful in birth, and loathsome in decay!
Eternal clouds are round us: doubt and death
Lie dark between to-morrow and to-day;
And thus our span of mourning flits away!

If the veins glisten, and the pulses glow,
If the free spirits innocently play,
Say, wilt thou seek for more? vain mortal, no!
What more can Dust demand, or Destiny bestow?

Yet Nature hath more blessings, her own joys,
Unearned by labour, and unsought by prayer:
Be wise to-day!—perhaps no golden boys
O'er the thronged banquet fling the torches' glare,
No rich aroma loads the languid air,
No burnished silver gleams along the hall
In dazzling whiteness, no fond lute is there
To wreath the sweetness of its magic thrall
O'er listening ears, rapt hearts, at some high festival;—

Yet Nature's fondest sons and fairest daughters
On her green bosom love at eve to lie,
Where the lone rippling of the quiet waters
Goes syllabing all sweets, and hoar and high
The old oak lends his solemn canopy.
What do they reek beneath their tranquil bowers
Of guilt or grief?—then happiest, when the sky
Laughs in the glad spring-dawning, and the hours
Dress every hill and vale in herbs and odorous flowers!

(1826.)

LOVE'S ETERNITY

Cum Paris Oenone poterit spirare relicta
 Ad fontem Xanthi versa recurret aqua.

OVID.

WHAT need of wit? What need of wile?
 I know your eyes are killing;
 But oh! he isn't worth a smile
 Who isn't worth a shilling!
 And yet, by all the gods of rhyme,
 And by your lips I swear,
 Though all my love is loss of time
 And all my hope despair,
 The glittering stream shall cease to stray,
 The wind refuse to rove,
 All solid things shall melt away,
 Before I cease to love!

Fair Freedom shall be found in Quod,
 Stern Justice in the Quorum,
 Carlile shall praise the grace of God,
John Bull shall learn decorum,
 Loyal addresses shall omit
 'Our fortunes and our lives,'
 The Commons shall be famed for wit,
 The Lords for virtuous wives,

The Tenth shall dress without a glass
Or dine with one remove,
All monstrous things shall come to pass
Before I cease to love.

Young widowhood shall lose its weeds,
Old kings shall loathe the Tories,
And monks be tired of telling beads,
And blues of telling stories;
And titled suitors shall be crossed,
And famished poets married,
And Canning's motion shall be lost
And Hume's amendment carried,
And Chancery shall cease to doubt,
And Algebra to prove,
And hoops come in, and gas go out,
Before I cease to love.

And Peel shall sink his Popery-cry,
And Buxton lay his plans down,
And Bankes shall vote with honesty,
And Liverpool with Lansdowne;
And hungry knights shall lose their steak
And never talk of pairing,
And county members keep awake
Through half an hour of Baring;
And not a soul shall go to grin
When Martin goes to move,
And Mr. Cobbett shall get in,
Before I cease to love!

Good sense shall go to Parliament,
The tithe shall be abated,
A Papist shall be innocent,
A slave emancipated,
A French gallant shall break his heart,
A Spanish Count his fetters,
A fortune-teller trust her art,
A Radical his betters ;
A pretty face shall like a veil,
A pretty hand a glove,
And Reason win, and bribery fail,
Before I cease to love.

In short, the world shall all go mad,
And saints shall take to masquing,
And kisses and estates be had
For nothing but the asking ;
And beauty shall be ugliness,
And ocean shall be dry,
And passion shall be passionless
And truth itself a lie,
And 'Stars' shall cease to shine below,
And stars to shine above,
And Cunningham be left for Lowe,
Before I cease to love.

THE LONDON UNIVERSITY

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY A COLLEGE TUTOR AT
A SUPPER-PARTY

YE Dons and ye Doctors, ye Provosts and Proctors,
Who are paid to monopolize knowledge,
Come make opposition by voice and petition
To the radical infidel College ;
Come put forth your powers in aid of the towers
Which boast of their Bishops and Martyrs,
And arm all the terrors of privileged errors
Which live by the wax of their Charters.

Let Macintosh battle with Canning and Vattel,
Let Brougham be a friend to the 'niggers,'
Burdett cure the nation's misrepresentations,
And Hume cut a figure in figures ;
But let them not babble of Greek to the rabble,
Nor teach the mechanics their letters ;
The labouring classes were born to be asses,
And not to be aping their betters.

'Tis a terrible crisis for Cam and for Isis !
Fat butchers are learning dissection ;
And looking-glass-makers become sabbath-breakers
To study the rules of reflection ;

'Sin: ϕ ' and 'sin: θ '—what sins can be sweeter?
 Are taught to the poor of both sexes,
 And weavers and spinners jump up from their dinners
 To flirt with their Y's and their X's.

Chuck-farthing advances the doctrine of chances
 In spite of the staff of the beadle;
 And menders of breeches between the long stitches
 Write books on the laws of the needle;
 And chandlers all chatter of luminous matter
 Who communicate none to their tallows,
 And rogues get a notion of the pendulum's motion
 Which is only of use at the gallows.

The impurest of attics read pure mathematics,
 The ginshops are turned into cloisters,
 A Crawford next summer will fill you your rummer,
 A Coplestone open your oysters.
 The bells of Old Bailey are practising gaily
 The erudite tones of St. Mary's;
 The Minorities any day will rear you a Kennedy,
 And Bishopsgate blossom with Airys.

The nature of granites, the tricks of the planets,
 The forces of steams and of gases,
 The engines mechanical, the long words botanical,
 The ranging of beetles in classes,
 The delicate junctions of symbols and functions,
 The impossible roots of equations—
 Are these proper questions for Cockney digestions,
 Fit food for a cit's lucubrations?

The eloquent pages of time-hallowed sages
 Embalmed by some critical German,
Old presents from Brunckius, new futures from
 Monckius,
The squabbles of Porson with Hermann,
Your Alphas and Betas, your Canons of Metres,
Your Infinite Powers of Particles,
Shall these and such-like work make journeymen
 strike work
And 'prentices tear up their articles?

But oh! since fair Science will cruelly fly hence
 To smile upon vagrants and gipsies,
Since knights of the hammer must handle their
 grammar,
And nightmen account for eclipses,
Our handicraft neighbours shall share in our labours
 If they leave us the whole of the honey,
And the *sans-culotte* caitiff shall start for the plate, if
 He puts in no claim to *plate-money*.

Ye Halls, on whose dais the Don of to-day is
 To feed on the beef and the benison,
Ye Common-room glories, where beneficed Tories
 Digest their belief and their venison,
Ye duels scholastic, where quibbles monastic
 Are asserted with none to confute them,
Ye grave Congregations, where frequent taxations
 Are settled with none to dispute them—

Far hence be the season when Radical treason
 Of port and of pudding shall bilk ye,
 When the weavers aforesaid shall taste of our boar's
 head,
 The silk-winders swallow our *silky*,
 When the mob shall eat faster than any Vice-
 master,
 The watermen try to 'out-tope us,
 When Campbell shall dish up a bowl of our *bishop*,
 Or Brougham and Co. cope with our *copus*.

(1825.)

ONE MORE QUADRILLE

Not yet, not yet; it's hardly four;
 Not yet; we'll send the chair away;
 Mirth still has many smiles in store,
 And love has fifty things to say.
 Long leagues the weary Sun must drive,
 Ere pant his hot steeds o'er the hill;
 The merry stars will dance till five;
 One more quadrille,—one more quadrille!

'Tis only thus, 'tis only here
 That maids and minstrels may forget
 The myriad ills they feel or fear,
 Ennui, taxation, cholera, debt;

With daylight busy cares and schemes
Will come again to chafe or chill ;
This is the fairy land of dreams ;
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille !

What tricks the French in Paris play,
And what the Austrians are about,
And whether that tall knave, Lord Grey,
Is staying in, or going out ;
And what the House of Lords will do,
At last, with that eternal Bill,
I do not care a rush,—do you ?
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille !

My book don't sell, my play don't draw,
My garden gives me only weeds ;
And Mr. Quirk has found a flaw—
Deuce take him—in my title-deeds ;
My Aunt has scratched her nephew's name
From that sweet corner in her will ;
My dog is dead, my horse is lame ;
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille !

Not yet, not yet ; it is not late ;
Don't whisper it to sister Jane ;
Your brother, I am sure, will wait ;
Papa will go to cards again.
Not yet, not yet. Your eyes are bright,
Your step is like a wood-nymph's, still.
Oh no, you can't be tired, to-night !
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille !

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